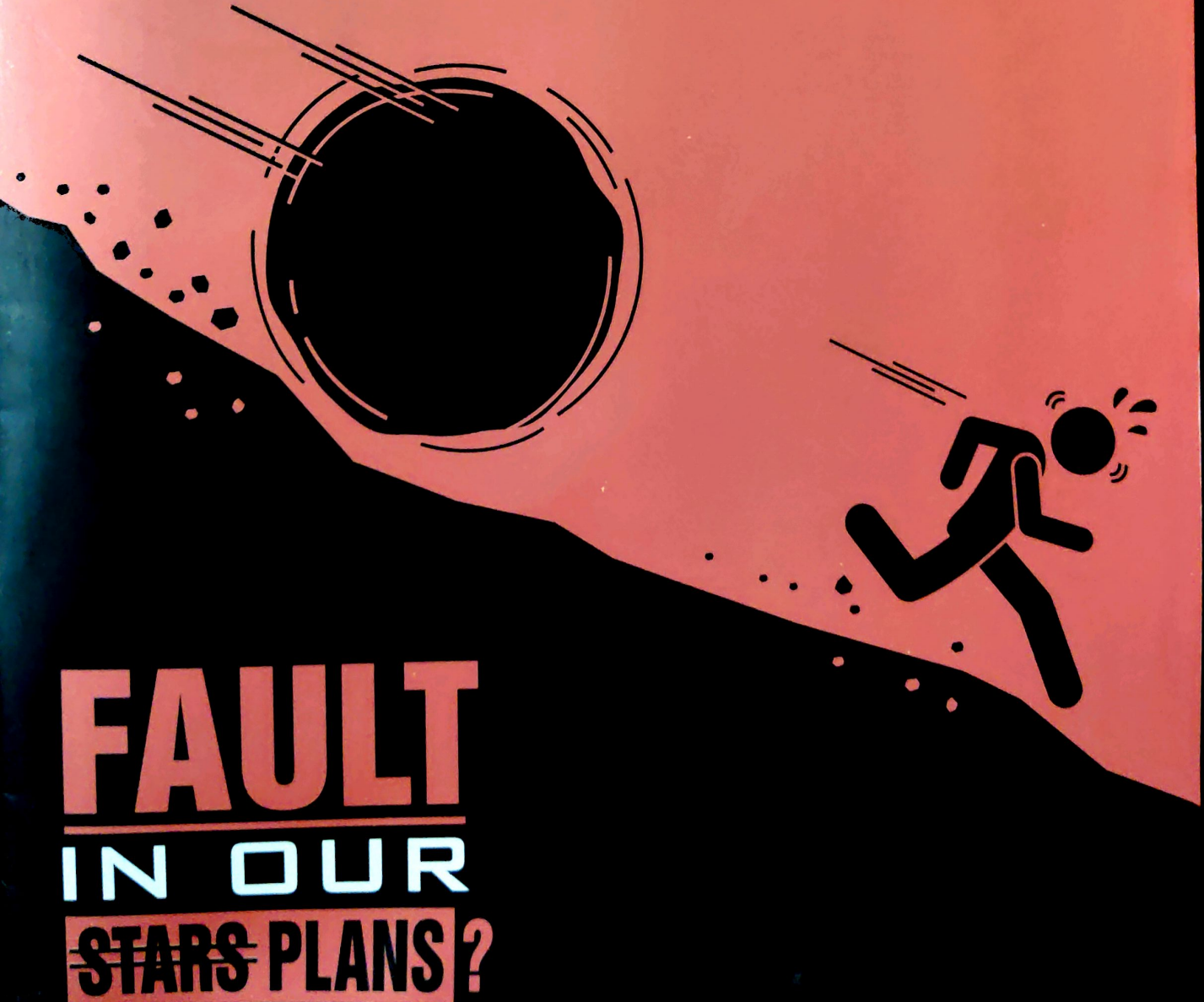


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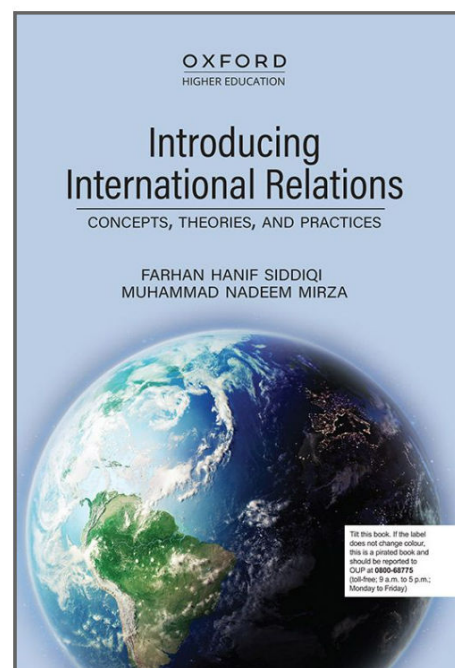
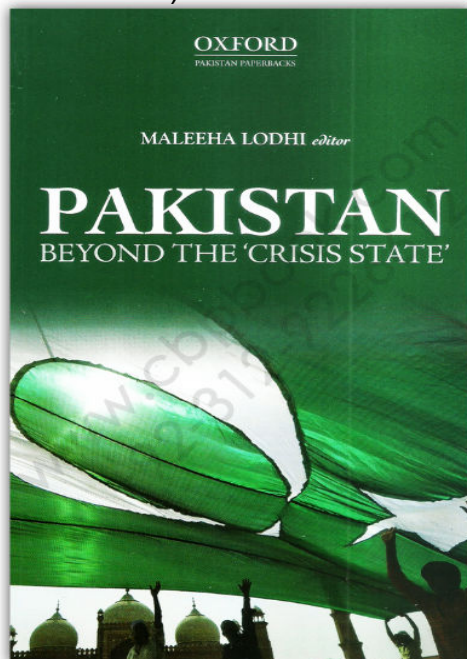
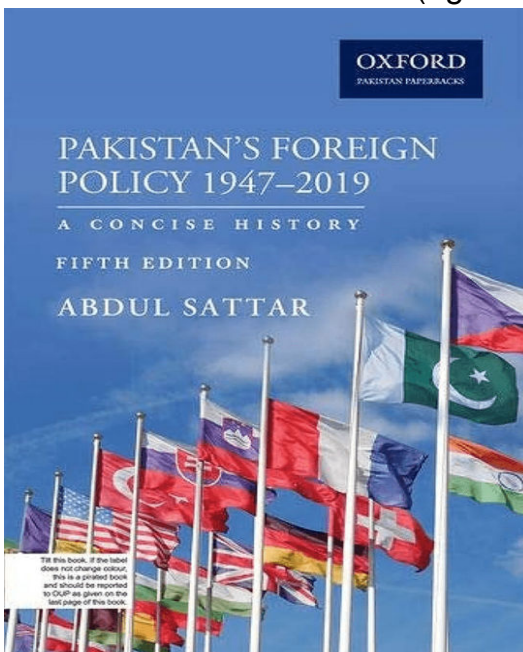
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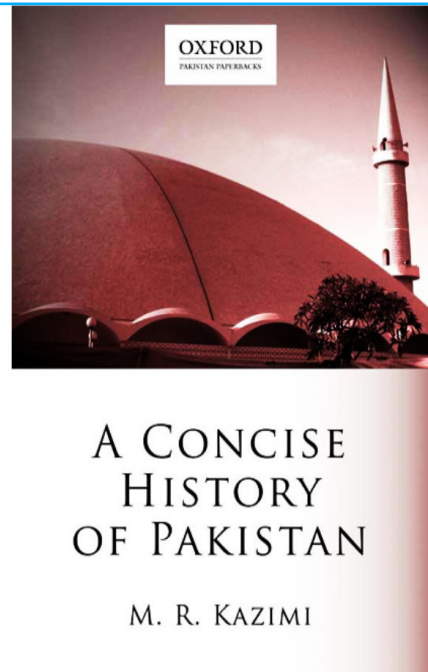
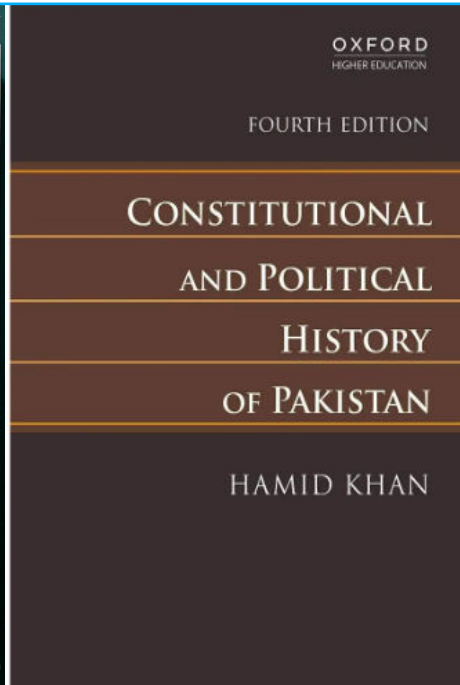
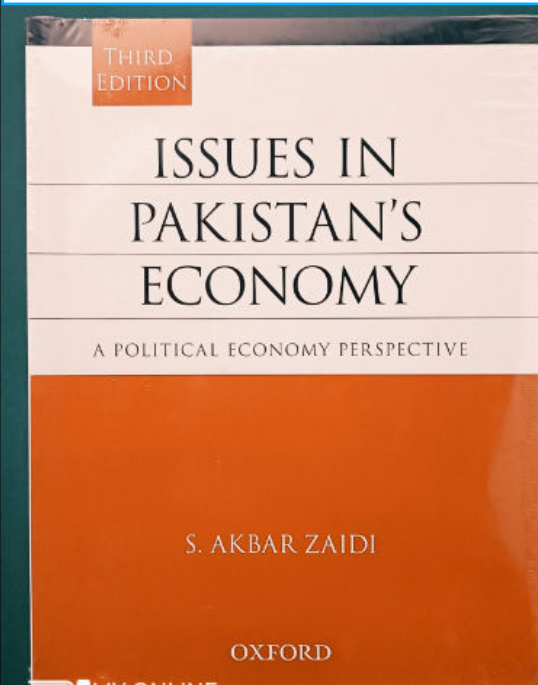
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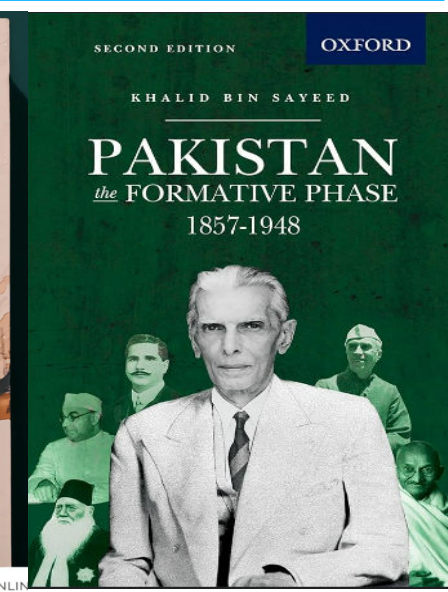
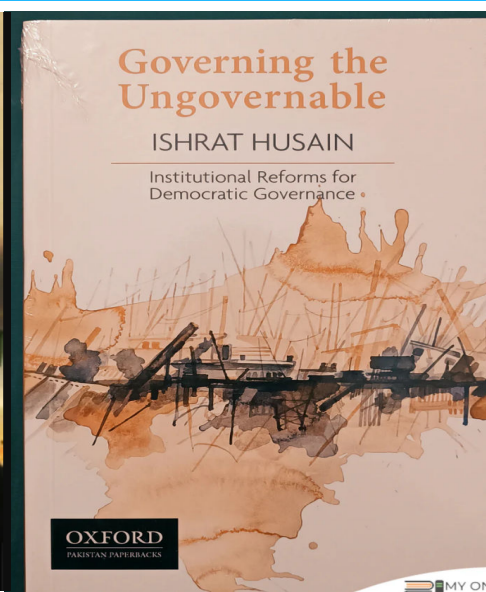
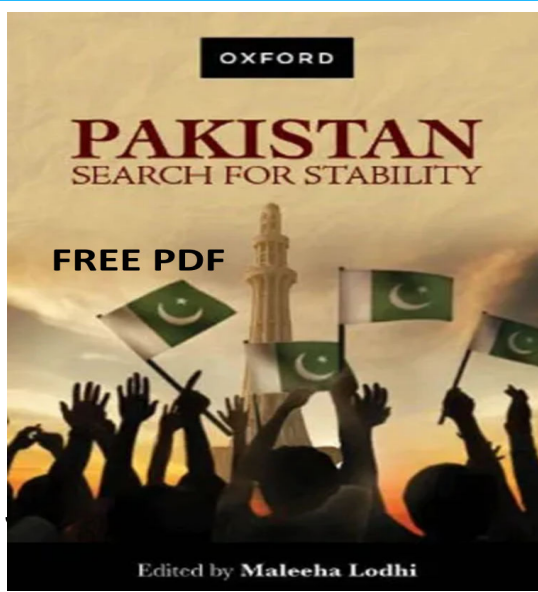
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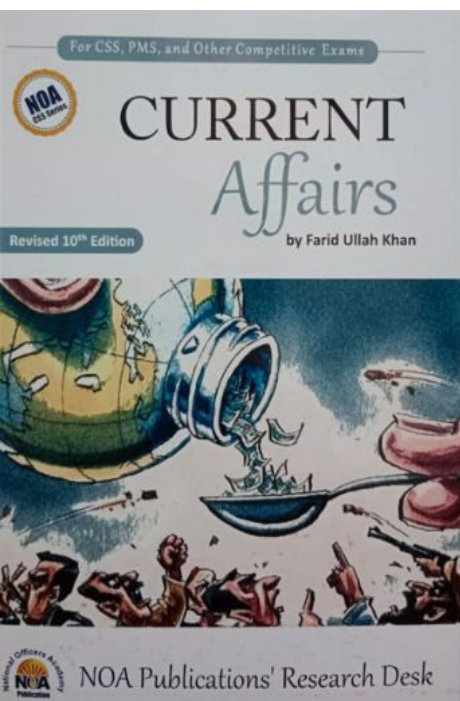


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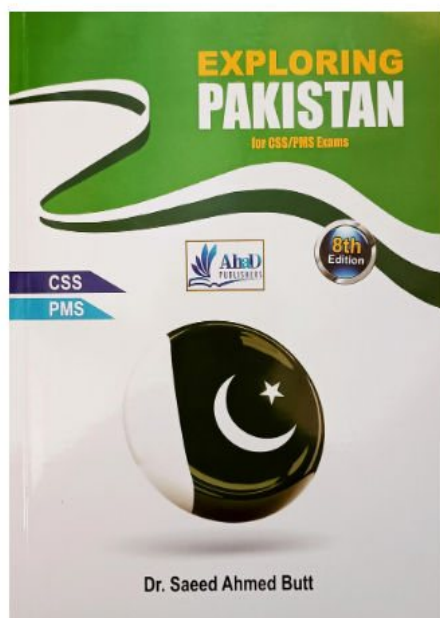
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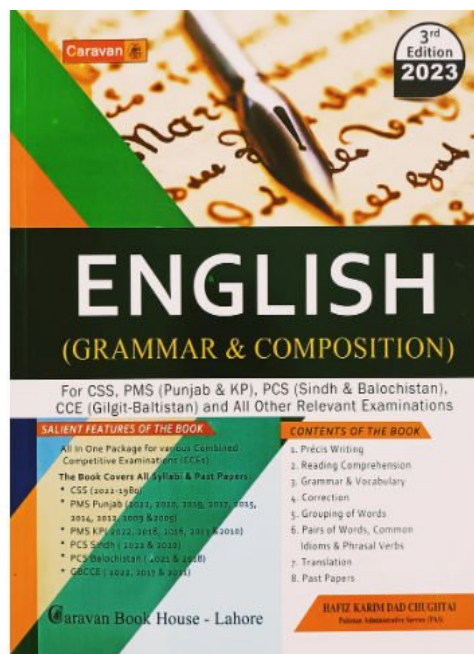




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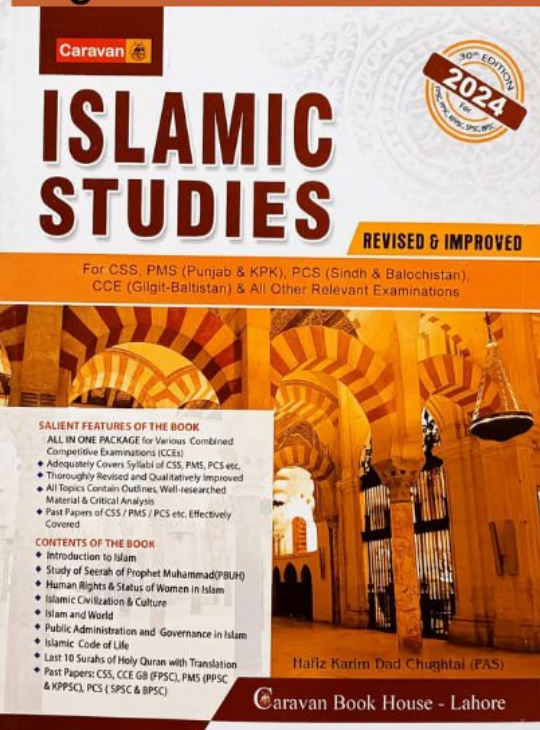
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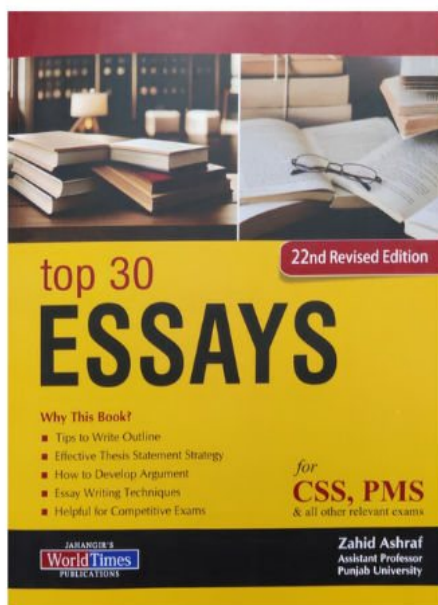
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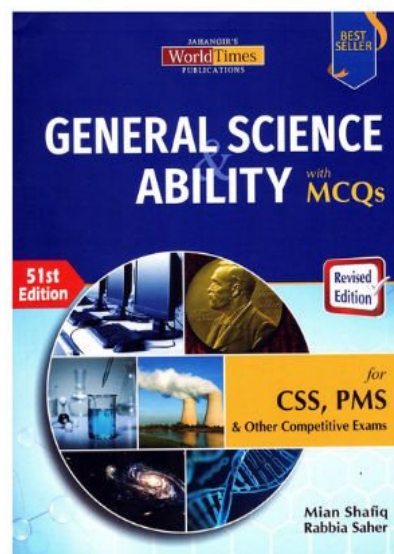
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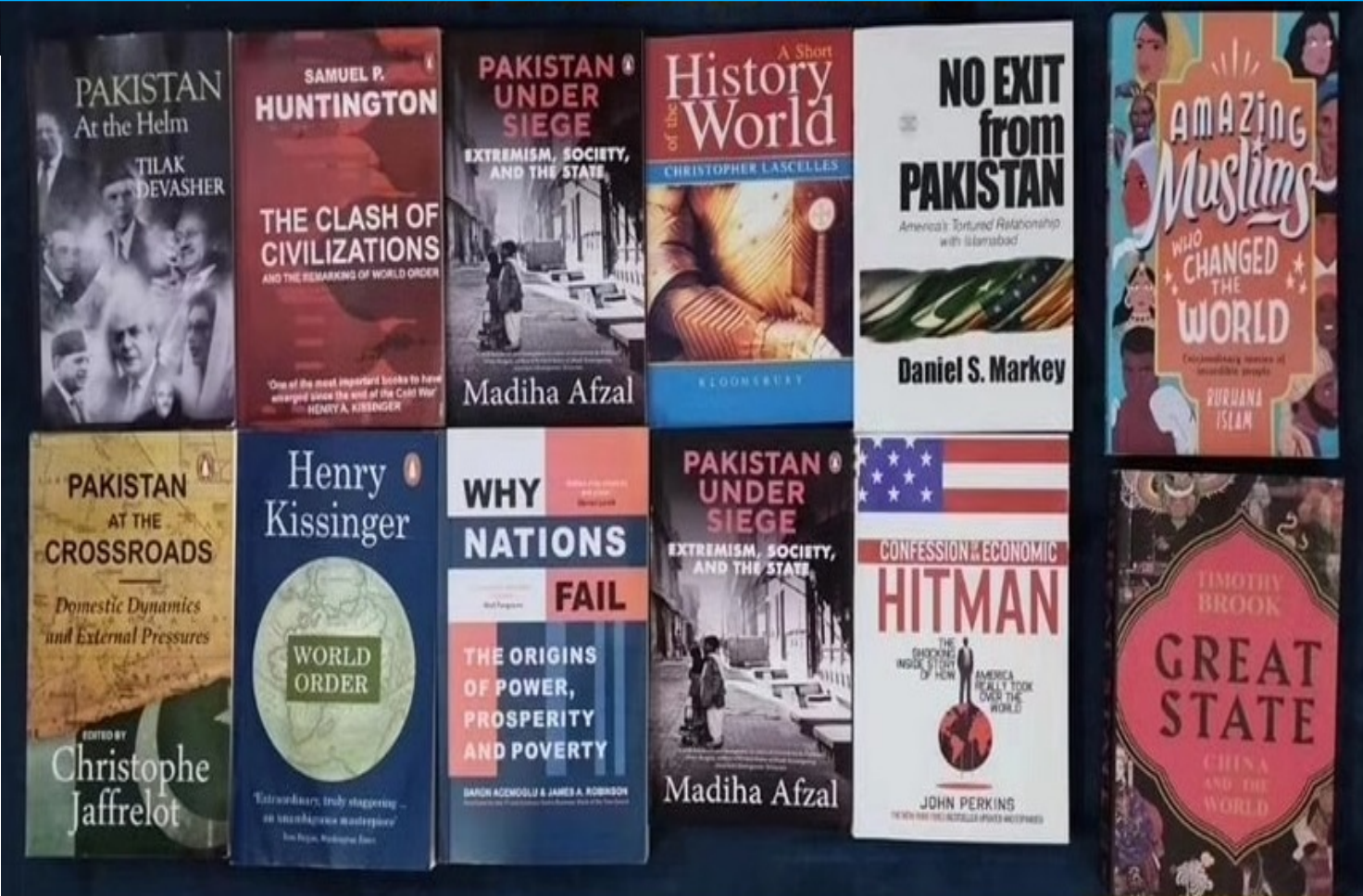
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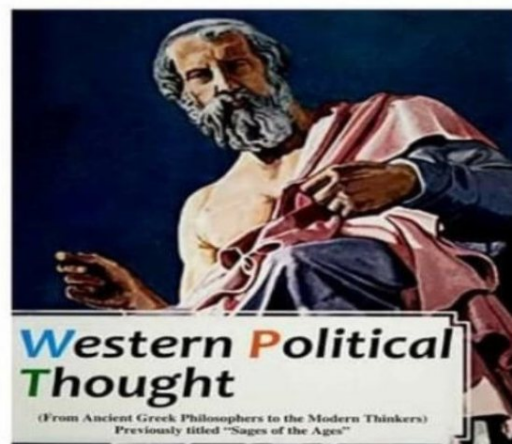
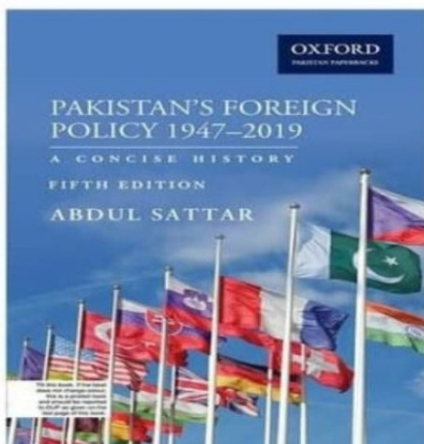
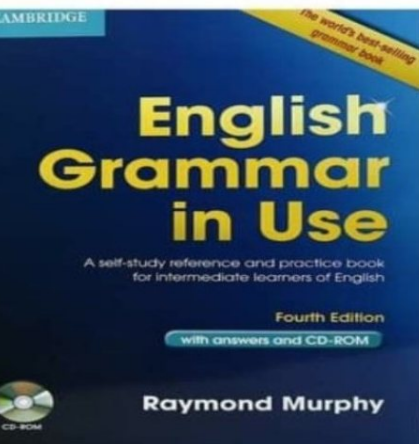
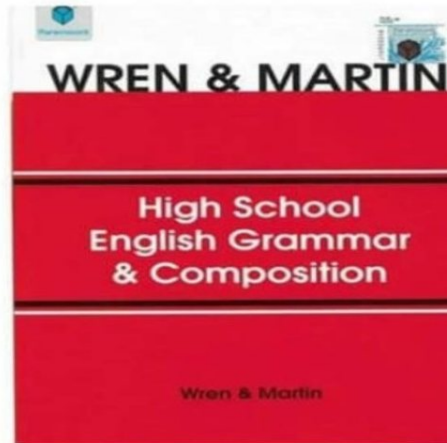
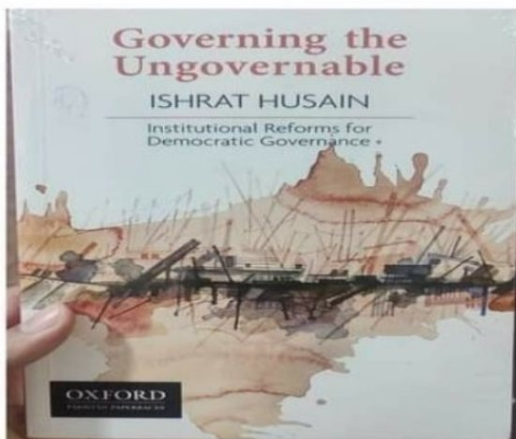
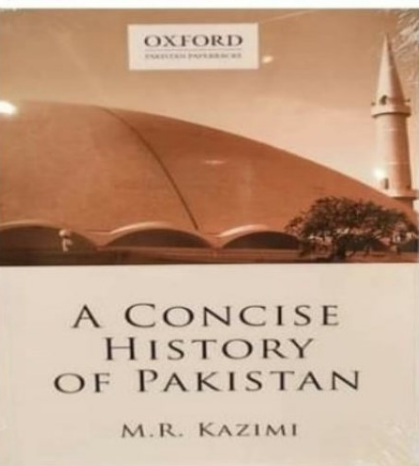


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EDITORIAL**OUR TEAM****Coping with Complex Challenges**

Our beloved country, Pakistan, is mired in a series of interconnected, complex challenges. From rampant poverty to soaring cost of living; from ubiquitous unemployment to growing brain drain; from a sagging economy to law and order challenges, and what not. Public discontent and alienation have intensified as those in the power corridors are still groping in the dark to find sustainable solutions to the problems they vowed to solve during the election campaign. On top of that, exorbitant electricity bills are devouring a huge chunk of a common household's monthly income. Extortionate gas bills will soon join the list.

The ominous interplay of administrative, constitutional, legal and economic challenges has badly exposed one thing: those running the country's system, including the politicians and bureaucrats, either do not have the capacity and ability to rise to the contemporary challenges or they are hollowing out the system by setting the wrong priorities, as is evident from the ongoing tussle between the judiciary and the executive.

The government frequently claims that the economy has stabilized and will be strengthened further. Although these claims have some credibility as various international institutions and rating agencies have improved Pakistan's ratings and predict that the genie of inflation will be back in the bottle soon, yet the deal with the IMF will come with stringent conditions that may reverse all the gains we have made so far.

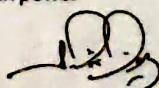
Another issue that not only takes a heavy toll on the law and order situation in the country but also tarnishes the country's image globally is terrorism that is rearing its ugly head again. Although several military operations have been launched to eradicate this menace once for all, the country witnessed at least 59 attacks alone in August this year. Incidents of terrorism in different parts of the country, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, indicate that foreign forces continue to provide financial, technical and information support, as well as arms, to their agents. The recent terrorist attack on a diplomatic convoy in Swat should ring the alarm bells in the power corridors, as had this attack been successful; it could have serious repercussions for the country.

Adding to this complex set of problems is the issue of unemployment and the growing brain drain. As politicians and key institutions vie for power, shrinking opportunities and eroding trust in the government are driving the youth to look beyond Pakistan's borders for a better future. This resulting brain drain leaves the country poorer, as it loses its best and brightest to nations perceived to offer greater promise.

In addition, the issue of exorbitant electricity bills has become a harrowing ordeal that is pushing countless families to the brink of despair. Already buried under the rubble of hyperinflation, the middle class, the backbone of society, is actually bearing the brunt of these inflated bills. Their hard-earned income is being devoured by exorbitant charges, leaving little for essentials, like food, education and healthcare. This is not merely a financial crisis, but a humanitarian one.

The interplay of these factors has entrenched a state of political volatility in Pakistan, significantly hindering its development and affecting its global standing. It is due to this reason that foreign investors are hesitant to commit capital to projects in Pakistan. A primary and permanent domestic contributor to perpetual political turmoil is the widespread disregard for the country's constitution, especially its well-established principle of separation of power. Institutions have developed a tendency to overstep their defined roles, encroaching upon areas outside their legal competence.

The key institutions must recognize that Pakistan's economic challenges are deeply connected to its political instability. The country's fragile economy, already weighed down by high debt and a persistent trade deficit, cannot withstand additional political upheaval. The people of Pakistan need sustainable solutions to their problems. The sooner those in power realize, the better it is!


Adeel Niaz

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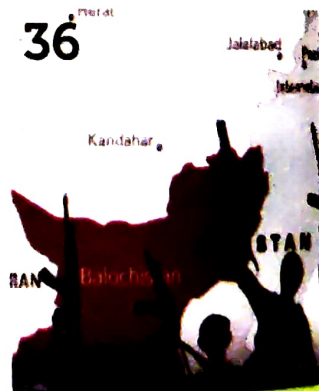
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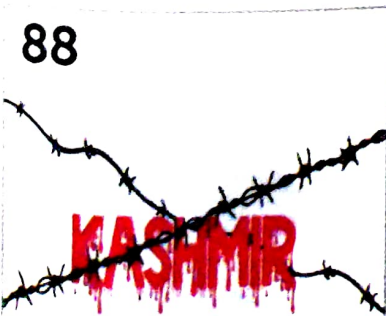
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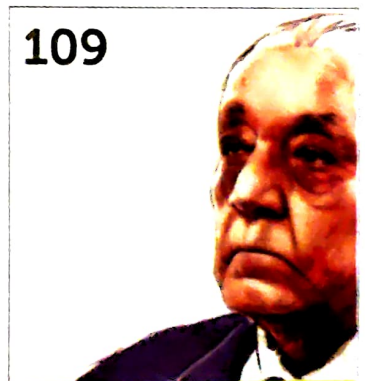
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A Cause of Grave Concern

Despite commendable progress in recent years, the fight against polio has taken a worrying turn with new cases being reported. This is a stark reminder that the battle against this crippling disease is far from over. The resurgence of polio should raise alarm bells in the concerned quarters, prompting a thorough reassessment of the ongoing anti-polio vaccination campaign. It is also the foremost responsibility of parents to ensure that their children are vaccinated against this virus. The consequences of inaction on the part of any of the two will be too severe, risking the future of countless young lives. While parental responsibility is crucial, the government and its partners must also scrutinize why cases continue to emerge despite ongoing vaccination drives. Identifying the root causes of this year's cases is vital to developing targeted solutions. The government must intensify efforts to engage with scholars and community leaders to dispel doubts about vaccination. Religious scholars, in particular, can play a pivotal role in reassuring hesitant families that the vaccine is both safe and necessary. The resurgence of cases should be seen not as a defeat but as an opportunity to recalibrate and strengthen the campaign. With renewed efforts, we can and must eliminate polio once and for all. Our children's future depends on it.

Ayesha Farooq, Islamabad

Pact for the Future

The UN's adoption of the 'Pact for the Future', which encompasses critical themes such as peace and security, global governance, sustainable development, climate change, digital cooperation, human rights, gender, youth and future generations, marks a significant milestone in the pursuit of effective and inclusive multilateralism. The landmark agreement signifies a crucial step towards addressing global challenges and shaping a responsible and sustainable digital future. Amid myriad global crises and the imperative for UN reform, the Pact for the Future is also significant as a tacit admission of the need for change. Notably, Russia and all of the countries backing its resolution regarding "domestic jurisdiction" have been labeled as police states by the UN, and huge question marks hover over their democratic credentials. However, all of the countries are also in the bad books of the Western powers, which they insist reflects UN bias against them. Even the African Union countries, which often face criticism from the West, were critical of the Russian resolution. However, one reform suggested for the international financial system faced stern opposition from Western countries, which successfully forced the UN to step back from a goal to make international financial institutions more representative, and also dump a proposal for a \$500 million stimulus to put the sustainable development goals back on track. Still, the adoption of the pact, and any potential success, will likely be seen as the legacy of UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

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Aslam Shahzad, Gujrat

Whither HEC?

In its new undergraduate policy, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) has excluded Urdu from its list of compulsory courses. As per the new policy, Urdu language and literature would not be a mandatory or elective subject in four-year BS programs offered by universities, five-year professional programs accredited by councils, or two-year associate degree programs offered by colleges. Remorsefully, it is happening in spite of the fact that there are Supreme Court orders on the implementation of Urdu as the national and official language. This is akin to abolishing the national language, as even the rural children are being separated from Urdu and are being pushed towards English. Initially, Urdu was a mandatory subject in undergraduate programs however, when the HEC made it an elective subject, most private universities seized the opportunity to discontinue instruction in Urdu altogether. Now, English is being promoted so that our children can compete in the global arena, but interestingly, Urdu is being taught at the undergrad level at universities even in European countries as part of the field of Oriental Languages. As Pakistanis, we must not forget the sacrifices of our elders who gave us a separate identity through Urdu.

Uzair Salman, Narowal

New Seed Varieties

In a rapidly changing world and mounting population pressure, countries like Pakistan shall have to embark on strategies aiming at generating new seed varieties for enhanced productivity and compatibility to climate change effects. It is imperative to enhance agriculture produce to cater to food requirements of burgeoning population and achieve the goals of food security and national progress and prosperity. Since the research and development process takes nearly a decade to develop required seed varieties, our scientists must also concentrate on producing pest-resistant and climate change-efficient seeds and also use latest techniques like genetic mapping and artificial intelligence for better results. Economic aspect must also be another area of focus for them to develop seeds with a futuristic vision and for a particular environment to avert attack of specific diseases. In this scenario, what is direly needed is to ensure a mechanism where quality seed reaches the farmers and the notorious market players are taken to task for an ultimate agricultural and economic growth and meet the most daunting challenge of food security.

Hassan Murtaza, Kashmir

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A CASE OF EXPLODING PAGERS

Thousands of pagers used by militant group Hezbollah's members exploded simultaneously across Lebanon on Tuesday, an attack blamed on Israel's Mossad. A total of 12 people were killed and close to 3,000 injured in these explosions

What is a pager? A lowdown

A small communication device used before mobiles became widespread. It displays a short message, relayed by telephone through a central operator. It works on radio waves, the operator sending a message by radio frequency



Why was Hezbollah using them?

The tech used in pagers and their reliance upon hardware makes them harder to monitor. They don't transmit anything in return, only receive radio waves. The group's members reduced mobile usage, fearing that they could be tracked

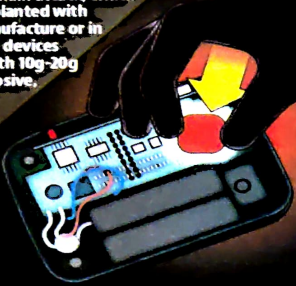
What caused the explosion?

With little disclosed from investigators so far, there are three main theories doing the rounds

Explosives planted

Analysts say that a supply chain attack, which involved the pagers being planted with explosives during their manufacture or in transit, was most likely. The devices would have been packed with 10g-30g of military-grade high explosive, likely to be PETN.

At 3.30pm in Lebanon, the pagers received a message that appeared as though it was coming from Hezbollah's leadership. Instead, the message activated the explosives. According to reports, Hezbollah's suspicion of booby-trapped pagers expedited the attack



Overheated battery

According to this theory, the pager's lithium battery was triggered to overheat remotely, kick-starting a process called thermal runaway. Analysts doubted this theory as only a fully charged battery can catch fire or explode.



Cyberattack on devices

Lebanon's foreign ministry called the explosions an "Israeli cyberattack," but did not provide any details. It is speculated that hackers infiltrated the devices and sent a malicious code, causing them to explode



Where did the pagers come from?

Hizbullah had ordered 3,000-5,000 pagers from Taiwan-based Gold Apollo. They were likely brought into Lebanon earlier this year. Most of them were the company's AR924 model. In a statement, the company said that the pagers that exploded were manufactured by its Budapest-based partner BAC Consulting KFT



Walkie-talkie blasts

Explosions went off in Beirut and multiple parts of Lebanon in an apparent second wave of detonations of electronic devices on Wednesday, state media said reporting that walkie-talkies and even solar equipment were targeted. At least 14 people were killed, and close to 450 injured were injured in the latest attack.



Geopolitical aftermath

The attacks could escalate the West Asia conflict

Since the end of the Second World War, the United States has assumed global responsibilities for deterring anti-Western powers and protecting its allies around the globe. This approach has required planning and resourcing to be able to fight in multiple simultaneous conflicts. Yet from 2011 to the present, the US has reduced the size of its military forces and narrowed the scope of its defence industrial base, even as competitors such as China, Russia and Iran have stepped up military spending, regional military operations and direct challenges to the interests of the US and the West. This has led to growing concern over the credibility of America's security guarantees, especially in the event of multiple coordinated threats.

How ready is the US to meet simultaneous threats? The answer depends on three key variables. First, how realistic is it that the US will face war on two or more fronts in the future? Second, what key gaps are driving concern over readiness? Third, what is a reasonable net assessment of capabilities against possible threats and what can be done to improve overall readiness?

Grounds for concern


There are several resource and capability shortfalls of concern regarding the ability of the US, and its allies, to fight simultaneously in different locations. The first is basic force structure - the existence of a sufficient number of ground divisions, carrier battle groups, air wings and forward basing to direct and execute combat around the globe. A second is financial: for the first time this year, the US government spent more servicing the national debt than on national defence, with the path of future spending indicating more constraints for military investment in the future. A third is industrial production capacity, especially for munitions and high-tech weapons. A fourth is sufficient supply of rare earth minerals and other strategic materials used in modern communication, navigation and weapon systems, an area in which China has an overwhelming advantage and near-monopoly. Finally, there is the matter of political will; after several decades of fighting wars of choice overseas (Iraq and Afghanistan especially), the willingness of US and Western publics to participate in conflicts abroad is wavering.

Current assessment

The conservative Heritage Foundation provides a systematic annual appraisal of US readiness to defend its global interests through its Index of Military Strength. The Index rates US aggregate military strength as "weak" when measured against potential threats and rivals, largely as a result of a decade of underfunding and lagging modernization. The result is "significant risk of not being able to defend America's vital national interests with assurance."

IS THE US READY FOR MULTIPLE WAR?

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An important caveat here is that the US can mobilize with determination and effectiveness for the right reasons. American ingenuity and latent military potential make it highly likely that the US will prevail in any sustained conflict in which its people feel directly threatened or aggrieved. Yet the point is clear for wars of choice or less vital interests - the US may not be in a position to enforce its will during multiple peripheral crises. Allies consequently must be prepared to contribute more to their own defence, and should not assume that Washington will save them. The erosion of American deterrent power vis-à-vis potential threats has not gone unnoticed among strategic analysts and policymakers, and is certain to be part of election debates over the next months. US forces remain the most potent in the world, but given the global scope of US interests, it is a fair question whether Washington's lagging investments have eroded its credibility against the suite of potential threats. Restoring that credibility doesn't mean just throwing more money at the Pentagon; it will require more astute alliance management and burden sharing, prudence in assessing regional conflict dynamics and a better job of restoring fiscal sanity to the US budget.

The writer is a CSS aspirant.



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**History Forgotten Is Bound to Repeat Itself
... and This Time in Reverse**

Juliana Gadgeva

"May you live in interesting times"... This Chinese curse perhaps most concisely describes current world affairs. We're once again at the precipice of a new global order, which theoretically promises the equal distribution of geopolitical and economic power in a number of regional centres around the world. In economic terms, it seems like multipolarity is already underway and reshaping the balance of power among the strongest economies. Geopolitically, however, the global order is in the midst of an uncertain, turbulent and tremendously strained period of transition; its conclusion is just as unpredictable as the developments leading up to it. When Francis Fukuyama proclaimed an end to history before the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the USSR, his main thesis was widely criticized and time has proven it to be untrue. However, is it possible that his "end of history" concept could prove to have merit, albeit in a very different way than originally intended?

In 1948, just a few years after the end of the Second World War, Winston Churchill said: "Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." The lessons of WWII are, undoubtedly, still remembered everywhere in the world and in words or official

diplomatic statements; peace is the highest international value, to be protected by any necessary international negotiations and diplomatic concessions. At present, however, it seems that world leaders say they want to preserve or restore peace, but their actions continuously create mistrust, imbalance and military conflict, ultimately paving the way for a much more significant war.

The end of history may represent a straightforward repetition of events and processes, and this time, the sense of déjà vu is undetected, because it's happening in reverse.

In the 20th century, a world war was followed by an extensive period of the Cold War, marked by numerous regional conflicts. The 21st century has already seen a prolonged period of regional conflicts and wars, which people continuously observe and even expect while debating where it all leads. If the hypothesis of mirrored repetition of history is embraced, then logically all current events are bound to be perceived as preconditions and triggers for the next world war, which may, unfortunately, be necessary to establish a new officially recognized global system of relations. The international order and its systematic characteristics have only ever been altered or replaced as a

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consequence of major wars or tremendous geopolitical shifts. The Westphalian system, considered today as the first system of international relations in Europe, was created after the development and adoption of the then-newly-established concept of the "nation state," moving away from the supranational influence of the Catholic church, which governed and guided Christian monarchies throughout the European continent during the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance. It was also a result of the end of two protracted struggles - the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) and the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648). The Westphalian series of peace treaties applied cardinal new principles to relations between European monarchies, such as the equal right to sovereignty and the principle of non-interference in another state's domestic affairs.

Almost two centuries later, the Napoleonic Wars spurred another major shift in the European international order, aiming to restore and preserve the pre-war balance of power between the major European monarchies, creating the so-called "Metternich" system of international relations. While reaffirming the Westphalian principles of sovereignty and non-interference, Metternich focused on establishing a long-term balance of power within Europe, thus raising geopolitical equilibrium to a pivotal state value.

Prior to and during the "Great War" (WWI), the Metternich system of international and national governance experienced an unprecedented upheaval; the whole of Europe was reshaped, ushering in the Versailles system of international relations. Three historical dynasties ended, one of the Great Powers in Europe was dismantled and turned into a conglomerate of small countries, and absolute monarchy was replaced by either different types of democracy in Western Europe or totalitarian or communist rule throughout Central, Southern and Eastern Europe. The German Weimar Republic, under the humiliating terms of the Versailles Treaty, dove into unprecedented political, economic and social crisis, hinting at the developments to come.

The Great War was only surpassed in magnitude by the Second World War. Unforeseen devastation, ideologi-

cal brutality, economic and social collapse, never-before-witnessed casualties; all paved the way for a non-European power to effectively enter and dismantle the Europocentric system of international relations that had governed the world up to that point. At its end, Europe being distributed in spheres of influence on a mere piece of napkin, the global order was once again changed and this time into a bipolar system of international relations, where nuclear deterrence would start the decades-long Cold War - a prolonged period of ideological battle marked by a constant strife for geopolitical expansion and dominance.

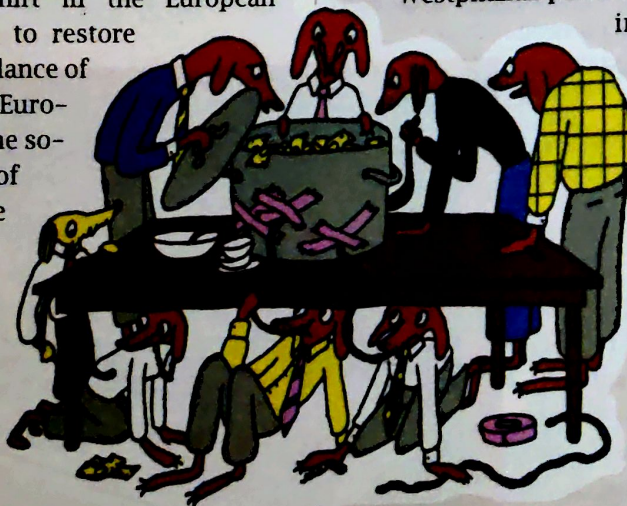
The collapse of the Soviet Union presented a new challenge to the established world order and a tremendous shift in the global balance. It effectively ended the Cold War and shifted international power from bipolar opposition into a unipolar monopoly over world affairs. For the first time since the Westphalian peace treaties, the principle of non-

interference into another nation-state's domestic issues was called into question and altered to allow for such interference in the event of a humanitarian crisis, thus opening the door for military interventions in domestic disputes anywhere in the world based on arbitrary ideological and moral grounds.

Step by step, willingly or otherwise, the world was led

into a new era of globalization and interconnectedness, predominantly led by transnational companies, which, along with their own considerations of fiscal expansion, have promoted, and continue to promote, the extremely effective soft power or political marketing used by US foreign policy. This global phenomenon gave birth to its own opposition - particularism, the struggle to preserve traditional regional or national values, including religious and cultural customs, which were the most common victims of globalization. Logically, the most traditional societies in the world were the most sensitive to externally imposed changes, thus creating the modern-day Leviathan of international terrorism.

The first decade of the 21st century was marked by the unprecedented terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. The narrative of military intervention



into a sovereign state shifted from humanitarian support back to traditional national security reasoning, as well as a Cold War flashback on the well-known theme of nuclear threats, based on the biased and unconfirmed intelligence that was used to justify the war in Iraq. Within months, the United States was rendered unprepared to handle the national characteristics of its enemy and seemed to have sunk in foreign terrain, engulfed in unfamiliar religious and cultural customs. Previously perceived as all-encompassing and limitless, the strength of the US gave out its first signs of overreach and exhaustion. The unipolar dominance of world affairs started to yield to the concept of a multipolar international system.

Being the largest country in the world by size, Russia has always been, and remains, one of the great world powers. Seemingly weakened after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and in the midst of its own political and economic transition period, Russia never lost its geopolitical or strategic significance and advantages. Slowly and steadily, the country began a determined process of reclaiming its position within the global order.

Following the collapse of the USSR, China not only managed to preserve its ideological orientation and political system, but through shrewd reforms and dedicated state effort, it successfully transformed into the fastest growing global economy, as well as the most significant manufacturer of goods in the world, with fully developed capabilities to influence and even shift economic relations and balances throughout the globe. Simultaneously, due to its ideological orientation, cultural specifics and diplomatic conservatism, China remains rather isolated in geopolitical terms. Usually reacting to international challenges rather than initiating foreign policy, the dragon of the global economy always seems a step behind when it comes to world developments. It's the concept of reciprocity that ultimately trips China's endeavours in current world affairs, and more specifically, the never-ending struggle to maintain international support and recognition amid scrutiny of its own domestic issues. India, meanwhile, has become an almost equal rival of China in its economic development; given its recent surpassing of all other countries in terms of population size, the state is managing the largest human

resource on the planet. A former British colony, it's still striving to restore its cultural heritage, though it has already established itself as one of the biggest world economies and geopolitical actors. Although constrained by regional domestic tensions and lingering conflicts with Pakistan and China, India's voice and position in international relations is becoming more and more relevant in current affairs. Numerous other states across the globe are making their mark and assuming more and more relevant positions in the world order - starting with the rest of the South Pacific countries and more specifically - Japan. From Pakistan to the Eurasian Caucuses, from Turkiye to the Middle East, and from the fast-developing economies of South America to the African continent, all of these represent potential poles in a future multipolar international order.

In spite of the evident international overspreading of the US, the country has never relinquished its unipolar claim over world



affairs. The tough lessons learned in Iraq initiated a gradual transformation in its foreign policy strategy, which moved away from direct military intervention into sovereign countries and towards achieving its international goals through igniting domestic civil unrest and political instability that, in turn, would serve the purpose of justification for partial military support to ultimately bring about radical regime change.

Under the banners of democratic change, free elections and human rights, the Arab Spring, which kicked off across several Middle Eastern countries from the early 2010s onwards, proved the new methods to be extremely effective.

In February 2022, Russia announced its special military operation in Ukraine - a conflict that had originally begun in 2014 with the annexation of

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Crimea and the regional conflict in Donbass. The latter two events may be perceived as national security steps taken by Russia in response to yet another "spring," encouraged by the US international agenda. The postponement of the EU agreement with Ukraine became the official reason for the so-called "Revolution of Dignity" that successfully brought a change in the national government, while leaving Crimea and Donbass as lingering, unresolved disputes between Ukraine and Russia, turning these regions into an international relations' no-man's land as well as a harbinger for future active warfare.

It took almost eight years for events to escalate and bring war to Europe once more. Preceded by months of tense diplomatic negotiations, ultimatums and the inherent underestimation of Russia's resolve by the US, the "Special Operation" began to the surprise of most of the Western world. If 1946 heralded the lowering of the iron curtain between Eastern and Western Europe and

effectively triggering the start of the Cold War, the year 2022 witnessed disturbingly similar events following the failure of diplomatic efforts to bring about a ceasefire in Ukraine. An iron curtain was again falling across Europe, putting an end to pivotal trade relations for the continent in agricultural and manufactured

goods as well as natural resources. It was the modern Western-type democracies that imposed an information blackout, banning Russian media outlets from broadcasting within Europe.

Democracy as a political system and ideological value has been heralded as the best form of state governance that humankind has ever developed. It's assumed to ensure freedom of speech, equal representation, respect for human and civil rights, and the acknowledgement of cultural heritage and religious views.

Yet, Europe, as represented by the EU and all of its member states, has undertaken an act of social genocide against Russian nationals who had already established their lives and professional development in different countries throughout the Old Continent.

Numerous artists, writers, singers, athletes, journalists, etc. have been denied the continuation of their

professional careers across Europe unless they denounce Russia and its geopolitical stance. This political campaign of social injustice, sanctioned by the collective Western democratic community, wasn't even able to give ordinary civilians permission to maintain a neutral position, which can only be described as one of the greatest acts of hypocrisy undertaken by the free democratic world as well as a source of great disappointment to those who espouse democratic ideals.

It has been around two and a half years since war returned to Europe and now both countries have started to exhibit certain signs of exhaustion and a readiness to engage in ceasefire negotiations, ultimately reaching a resolution to the conflict and putting an end to the war. However, the situation still seems unresolvable, and achieving an outcome which is equally satisfactory for both sides is impossible. Ukraine is firmly insisting on restoring its pre-2014

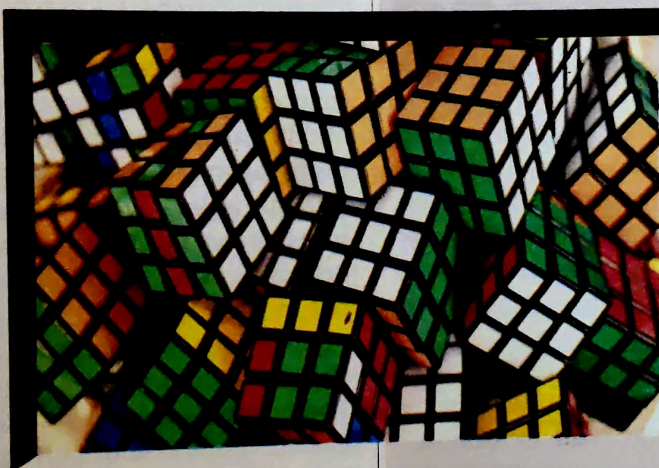
borders, including in Crimea,

while Russia needs to reach a deal for a nationally dignified exit to withdraw its troops, which will require much more concessions than those currently being offered. Any realistically possible outcome acceptable to Russia would be deeply unsatisfactory to Ukraine, which would suggest that even if active warfare is discontinued, the conflict

will remain and linger, ultimately transforming into an underground movement for liberation within the remaining Ukrainian territories.

An iron curtain has lowered across Europe once again, ominously hinting at the growing tensions on the Old Continent. Even if the current war in Ukraine reaches a resolution, it will most probably be short-lived and could possibly reignite to engulf Europe and perhaps the world in a much more significant conflict. A number of other regional conflicts around the world promise the same outcome. The current global order is constantly bubbling and shifting, gradually transforming into what today is expected to be a new, more balanced multipolar system of international relations. However, the path leading down that road might present a hurdle, which one day may come to be known as the "Third World War."¹

(Courtesy: Valdai Club)



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Preventing and Resolving Conflicts

Our collective security mechanisms have failed

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Throughout the history of humankind, no single issue has caused more trouble than war and conflict. But our inability to prevent or resolve disputes in a peaceful and timely manner further exacerbated the situation.

Since 1945, and even more so since the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, there has been a widespread belief that wars and other armed conflicts are becoming increasingly rare phenomena, confined now only to those parts of the world where democracy is in short supply, and posing no real danger to global or even regional stability.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, there was a misguided tendency in international political thinking and policymaking to follow the "End of History" paradigm proposed by American political scientist Francis Fukuyama, who argued:

"What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such; that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."

Since common wisdom has it that democracies do not fight one another, this was also supposed to be the era wherein there will be no wars.

But for evidence of the failure of our system of global collective security, established in the aftermath of World War II, along with the accompanying mechanisms to ensure its success, one must look no further than the ongoing conflicts in Gaza, Ukraine and Syria.

The war between Israel and Hamas is a direct consequence of more than 75 years of failure to secure peace between these two antagonists, which allowed

Iftikhar Chandio

the conditions that ultimately led to the deadly events on, and since, Oct. 7, 2023, to fester.

To make matters worse, since the start of this war, which has already claimed many thousands of innocent lives and threatens to spread throughout the Middle East, no international body or mechanism has been capable of bringing it to a quick conclusion. Ukraine is in the third year of fighting a Russian invasion that had been brewing for at least eight years before escalating into a full-blown war, which broke out in February 2022. And, then, there is the long-running civil war in Syria, which, since 2012, has claimed the lives of more than half a million people. These three wars are just the tip of the iceberg of global conflict and suffering. The Conflict Data Program at Uppsala University in Sweden estimates that there are 189 active armed conflicts around the world, most of them categorized as "Non-International Armed Conflicts."

The number of deaths each year caused by this organized violence almost doubled from 121,000 in 2021 to 238,000 in 2022. Much of the increase resulted from the conflicts in Ukraine and in Ethiopia's Tigray region, which together accounted for more than 100,000 battle-related deaths.

There is little likelihood that we will see any improvement in this dire situation when the statistics for 2023 are compiled and analyzed. The year 2024 will also see the same trend.

In addition to the cost of these conflicts in terms of human suffering, they also have an immense impact on the global economy. According to one assessment, in 2022, the global economic impact of violence, which includes the money spent on managing, preventing

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and dealing with the aftermath of conflicts, amounted to a staggering \$17.5 trillion in terms of the purchasing power parity exchange rate, a method used to compare the value of currencies between different countries. This figure is equivalent to 12.9 percent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP), or \$2,200 per person, and reflects an increase of 6.6 percent from the previous year.

All this points to the fact that wars are still endemic to our societies and that we are nowhere close to eradicating them. This is telling evidence that these extremely costly conflicts rather than being resolved are merely being managed, albeit inadequately, given their protracted durations. Many ongoing conflicts have become open-ended: more than 75 years of conflict between Israel and Palestine; the endless disputes over Kashmir or Taiwan; more than 30 years of fighting in Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Iraq; more than 10 years of war in Libya and Syria; and almost 10 years of conflict in Yemen and Ukraine.

The UN and its main mechanism for collective security, i.e. the Security Council, have failed repeatedly to prevent these wars or bring them to a swift end, as have other international bodies. Many will argue that these failures are not coincidental. Rather, they are intrinsic to a complex international system in which the basic component remains the nation-state. This state of affairs points not only to failures on the bilateral or regional levels, but also on a global level. Throughout history, opinions about our propensity for war have been divided.

"Realists" believe conflict is an inherent part of human behaviour and therefore inevitable, or even necessary, to establish and maintain national, regional and global

stability.

A more liberal school of thought holds that wars and other conflicts are the result of flawed domestic and international institutions and that "perpetual peace" would prevail if these could only be perfected.

There are also those who blame conflicts on global structures and the capitalist system. However, what emerged after the Second World War was a mixed system of powerful nation-states that are now effectively competing with the international organizations tasked with maintaining peace. The stated objective of the world's main mechanism for collective security, the UN, is: "To maintain international peace and security, and to that end, to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace."

And yet, rather than preventing or resolving conflicts, this international system, its agencies, and the nation-states that comprise them have concentrated more on managing wars and their effects through humanitarian responses, peacekeeping operations and diplomatic means, including coercion.

This situation is the result of various factors, among them a strong collective sense of despair that, given current international structures and conditions, the prevention or resolution of conflicts has become impossible.

Add to this a lack of effective decision-making instruments, military limitations and a vast humanitarian machine, and the entire international system has become more invested in conflict management rather than prevention or resolution.

A crucial aspect of this troubling situation is that the international community lacks not only a vision for how conflicts could and should be, more effectively prevented or resolved, but also the courage to develop or implement policies that go beyond conflict management.

Those who envisaged during the Second World War a "United Nations" as a mechanism for world peace might not have had all the practical answers on how to achieve it but they did at least have their vision and a desire to build a strong international community out of the ruins of global war.

Their successors have been neither as bold nor as courageous in their efforts to ensure the vision of the founders became a reality. We also need to recognize the fact that certain domestic conditions are more conducive to conflict and less so to its prevention and resolution. Political instability, economic hardship, leadership crises and even the effects of climate

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change can all make the prevention or resolution of conflict more of a tall order.

However, there are several reasons why, despite the rhetoric of many politicians and diplomats who proclaim support for conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building, the actors on this stage all too often resort to a familiar toolbox of conflict management. This includes open-ended diplomatic negotiations, sanctions, regional initiatives or third-party mediation, with no clear objectives or deadlines. Engagement often takes place through the UN Security Council, which is frequently paralysed by the power of veto held by its five permanent members (P5).

It can hardly be disputed that conflicts can best be prevented or resolved through diplomatic efforts, and that humanitarian aid is essential to mitigate the effects of international political violence while it is happening and in its aftermath.

Yet none of the international institutions and instruments that should be playing a key role in preserving peace and security — including the UN's General Assembly and Security Council, NATO, the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, among others — can effectively do so.

One major obstacle that prevents these institutions from making a significant difference to the world by helping to ensure peace and rights for all is that they have not been given enough independent power to take action by the nation-states that comprise their membership and empower them. As a result, their

remits are always limited by member states, and deliberately so.

To acknowledge the important role of diplomacy and humanitarian aid in dealing with the effects of wars and reducing their impact, and the need to respond quickly when conflicts do arise, is to acknowledge the shortcomings of the current international system and its mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of war and peace-building.

But this should not be mistaken for an endorsement of the situation as a sustainable approach. The result of such an approach is that the destructive roots and results of conflicts are allowed to persist and fester, at best tamped down until the next inevitable conflagration.

The Israeli-Palestinian Oslo Accords, the Bosnian Dayton Accords, the Geneva Declaration on Cyprus and the conflicts in the Sahel region of northern Africa are just a few examples of conflicts that are at best on hold, and at worst exacerbated, storing up even more trouble for the future as the various participants prepare for the next round of hostilities. Another pitfall to avoid in efforts to prevent or peacefully resolve conflicts is the fallacy of the "unique" nature of each one. This results in each of them being addressed in isolation, rather than building a body of knowledge based on recognition and exploration of the common features and shared reasons for the occurrence of war, and for the repeated failures to bring conflicts to an end in a satisfactory, sustainable

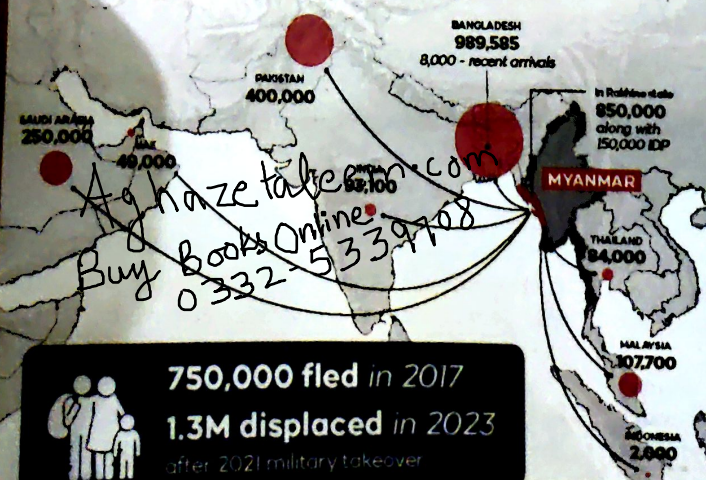
manner. Building an international regime for peace requires not only a comparative study of conflicts but also collaboration with those on all sides who have experienced and studied the horrors of war within their own societies, and bringing everyone together to share their views and discover the commonalities and differences among them, while building mechanisms for prevention and resolution. Fortunately, the threat that has hovered over our heads since the end of WWII of another direct confrontation between major world powers, especially those armed with nuclear weapons, has failed to materialize.

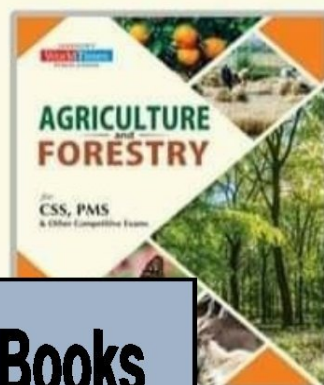
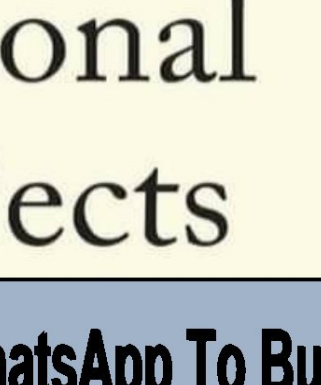
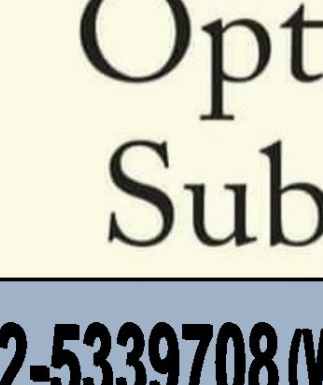
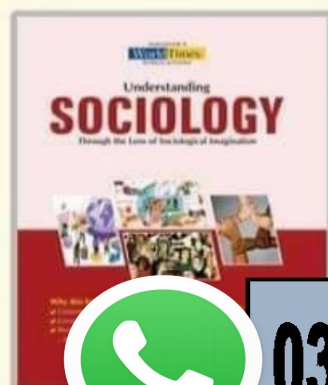
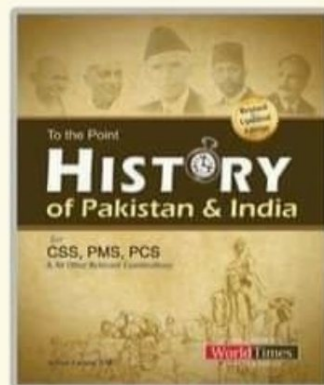
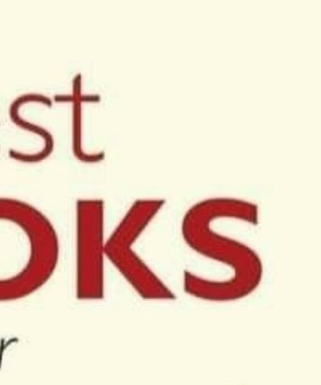
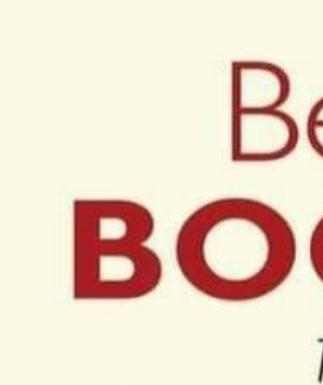
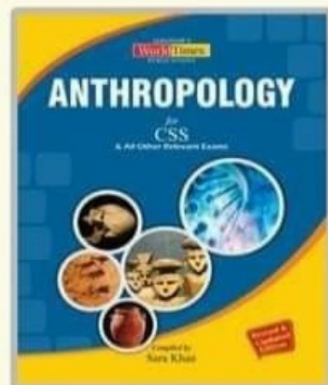
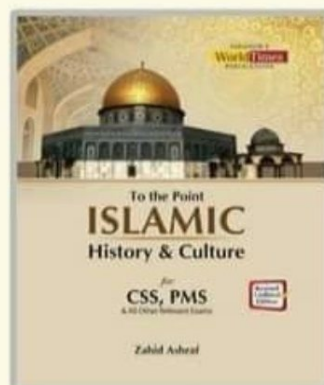
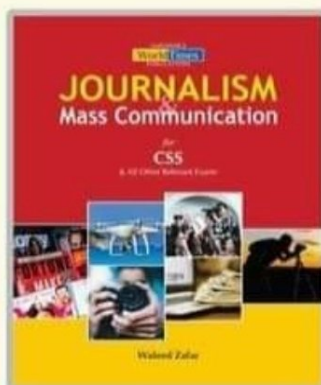
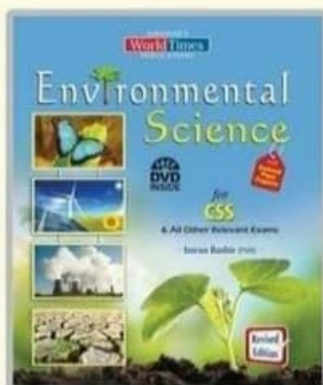
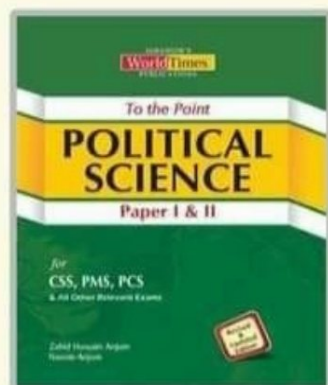
Nonetheless, war and conflict remain a part of the lives of so many people around the world, and leave in their trail death, devastation and prolonged misery. Yet humanity still has not found a formula to prevent them or bring them to an end. ■

The writer is a lecturer of history.

WHERE DO THE ROHINGYA TAKE REFUGE?

Myanmar ~3.6M Rohingya dispersed worldwide

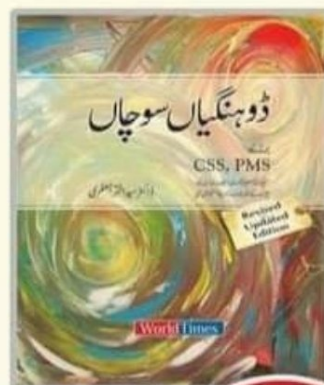
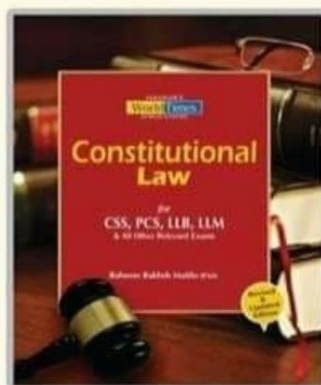
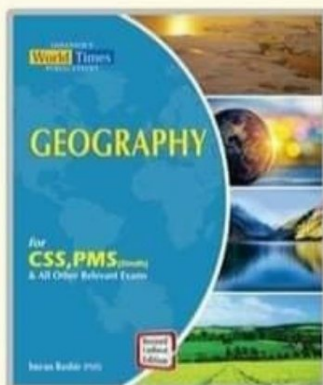
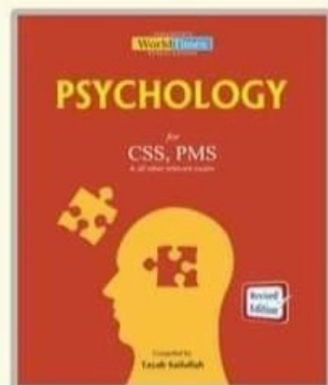
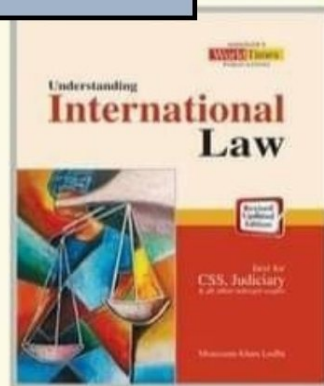
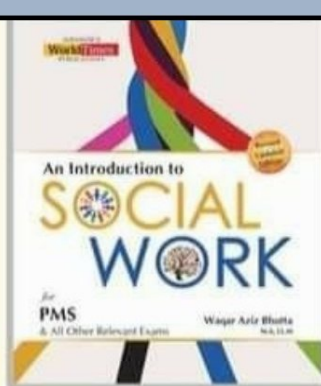
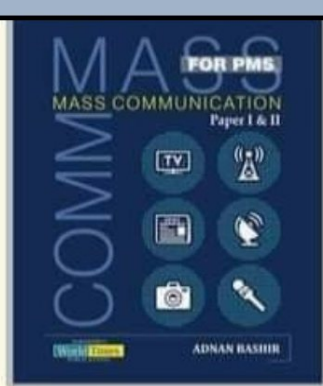
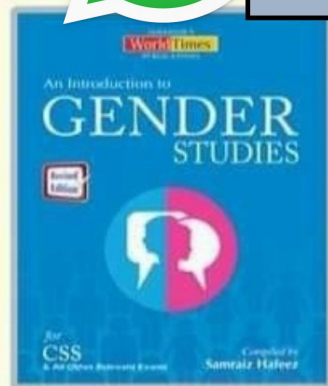




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The Indo-Pacific Arena

US-China Race over Islands

Zain ul Abdin Jessar

Introduction:

In today's global geopolitics, the Indo-Pacific is the most important arena; a theatre for a new cold war, as many analysts believe, that is being fought between the US and China. The rise of China and the US's Pivot to Asia Policy in 2007 shifted the global attention towards this vital region and made it a battleground for a new great game. Currently, the clash for the pursuit of greater geopolitical and geoeconomic motives has made this region a hotspot for the great-power confrontation between the US and China and their respective allies; the confrontation is grave and severe, just like that of the Cold War era between the US and Soviet Union. Both countries are fighting tooth and nail to control the resource-rich seas, grip important choke points of global maritime trade, protect allies and their respective geopolitical and geoeconomic interests, and take over the strategically located islands in the waters of the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

Indo-Pacific Region

The Indo-Pacific is considered the cornerstone of new global power politics. It is a wide swath of geographically important countries, water bodies, straits and islands that come across the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The term Indo-Pacific is itself mired in controversy, as it is widely used by China. However, the US uses 'Asia-Pacific' instead of the Indo-Pacific to keep the Indian Ocean region a separate entity for its another great-power ambition of containing China, in cahoots with its partners like India and Australia. The region is strategically important due to the presence of important sea lines of communication, e.g. the Malacca Strait, Taiwan Strait, Lombok Strait, Bab el-Mandab Strait, Hormuz Strait, Mozambique Channel,

and so on. Moreover, the region contains over half of the world population, hosts seven out of ten largest standing armies in the world and contains six nuclear states. The region is also responsible for 60 percent of global maritime trade, and one-third of global shipping lane's pass through the South China Sea (SCS). All these strategic leverages make this region vital for both the US and China. The former considers this region vital for countering the growing economic, military and diplomatic clout of the latter. On the other hand, China views this region as vital for its grand economic outreach plan and its claim of having legitimate rights over the SCS and Taiwan's reunification. In order to take control of this region, both countries have started a race to acquire the strategically important islands to have an active presence here.

The Race over Islands

The Indo-Pacific is a critical region for the US-China great game, with the Islands being a significant focal point of the competition. The region contains thousands of small and big islands many of which

- The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), comprising India, Japan, Australia, and the United States, has emerged as a pivotal strategic partnership in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Initially conceived in the early 2000s and formalized in 2007, the Quad aims to promote a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, uphold international law, ensure freedom of navigation, and advance democratic values.

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AUKUS ALLIANCE

- **Focus:** It will focus on protecting shared values and promote security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Nuclear Submarine to Australia:** It will help Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines (SSNs) in cooperation with the UK & the US.
- **Help in countering China's** growing power in the strategic Indo Pacific-region (Australia 7th nation to have.)
- **Tensions b/w Australia & China** have grown manifold recently.
- **Cooperation in new technologies:** It will involve a new architecture of engagements across emerging technologies such as AI, quantum technologies and undersea capabilities.



have become a bone of contention between the two great powers. Both countries want to secure alliances with island nations to assert their presence in the region. These island nations possess strategic attributes and are fit to be used for military and naval bases. The US and China have their own strategies vis-à-vis these islands. The US wants to strengthen its relations with important islands, like Japan, the Philippines and Taiwan, which are also its key allies. Besides, it is increasing its military presence in the region, with a focus on naval and air power, to deter Chinese aggression. Moreover, the US is also keen to promote economic development and infrastructure investment in the region through initiatives like the Indo-Pacific Strategy, Build Back Better World (B3W), and Partners in the Blue Pacific.

As far as China is concerned, it is constructing artificial islands in the SCS, militarising them, asserting its claims over the disputed territories and having a watch over Taiwan and possible naval support for it by the US and its allies. Moreover, it is also seeking to extend its area of influence to the naturally occurring islands like Spratly, Paracel and Solomon Islands to have a presence in the wider Indo-Pacific. Also, China is focused on the island nations like Sri Lanka and the Maldives, in the Indian Ocean region, where it has invested heavily in infrastructure projects so as to expand its influence. So, the developments around these island nations in the Indo-Pacific from Sri Lanka to the Solomon Islands make it explicit that both countries are engaged in a tooth-and-nail fight over controlling these islands, and neither country wants to quit.



Chinese Policy for Islands

China is an active player in the region. Due to its geographical proximity to the SCS, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, China considers the islands adjacent to it as its legitimate area of influence. In order to assert its influence, China is actively advancing to control the strategically important islands in the region for its military bases. The most important area controlled by China is the Paracel Islands — a disputed archipelago. China gives utmost strategic priority to this island for asserting its active presence in the SCS that it claims to be its maritime territory. The island is also claimed by Taiwan and Vietnam. Also, China holds control over the Spratly Islands — another disputed archipelago in the SCS that is partially controlled by China. Moreover, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines also lay claim to this island. These countries have shown serious reservations over China's active military buildup on the island. Moreover, Scarborough Shoal is also a disputed reef in the SCS and is a permanent bone of contention between China and the Philippines. China has controlled this region through its military might. However, the Philippines claims this shoal as part of its maritime area. Apart from this, the Solomon Islands are also influenced by China in the region. It is a very important island in the region that signed a security deal with China back in 2022, prompting serious concerns for the US and its ally Australia. By having influence over this island, China has asserted its active military presence in the neighbourhood of an important US ally—Australia. Apart from this, China controls 100-150 big and small islands in the region. Moreover, China has also raised eyebrows in the US and the West for creating artificial islands in the Indo-Pacific like Fiery Cross Reef, Mischief Reef, Subi Reef, Woody Islands, Johnson South Reef, Gaven Reed, etc.

US and the Islands

In order to contain China and fulfil its geo-economic and geo-strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region, the US lures important islands on its side. The US wants to pursue its interests in the SCS in particular, and across the wider Indo-Pacific region in general. By having an active military presence in the SCS, the US wants to negate China's overall maritime claim over this important water body. The

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US considers the SCS free, open and accessible to all the countries, as the Sea comes under the access of all the countries as it lies under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Convention on the Law of Seas (UNCLOS) that provides right of navigation to all the countries. In order to protect this right, the US has sought alliances with the countries in this region and has also controlled vital islands. Although the US does not control any island in the SCS, it has an active military presence in the region and has intermittently conducted freedom of navigation operations

Hawaii Island, Guam Islands, Northern Marina Islands, Palau Islands and so on.

Conclusion

To cut the story short, islands have become the battleground for the US and China to acquire their wider geopolitical, geoeconomic and geostrategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region. The tussle over these islands is going to be deeper in the future, as no country is ready to cease its ambitious plans in the region. China believes the entire Indo-Pacific region is the area of its influence. While the US wants to check

Why the US Presidential Election Matters for the Indo-Pacific

Few elections draw global attention like the US presidential race. Countries in the Indo-Pacific region are highly concerned about the outcome of this election. This vote will have a significant impact on the security and economic development of the region, and, in particular, will affect the development of the region's most important bilateral relationship, between China and the United States, over the next four years.

Most Chinese researchers believe that the US grand strategy toward China—containing China's space for development to prevent it from challenging US hegemony—has become the consensus of the Democratic and Republican parties, as well as the consensus of Congress and the executive branch. Regardless of who wins the presidency and controls Congress, the general direction of the next US administration's policy toward China seems all but certain. Despite this, the region is paying close attention to the outcome of these elections as they will have several concrete impacts on China-US relations.

First, the policy teams that both former President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris could select to shape their administrations' postures on China-US relations will be significant. While Trump's views on China are widely known, we know less about Harris's views. Her China policy team is likely to be composed of personnel from the Barack Obama and Joe Biden administrations, while Trump's China policy team is likely to include several "super hawks" on China.

Second, the policy priorities of Trump and Harris matter. Trump's focus is undoubtedly on the economic and trade relationship between the two countries, and his rhetoric about imposing 60 percent tariffs on Chinese goods and eliminating China's most-favoured-nation (MFN) status for trade would truly decouple the economies of the two countries if it were translated into actual policy. So far, Harris has not given a comprehensive account of her foreign policy agenda, but we can anticipate a continuation of the Biden administration's China policy, which places more emphasis on scientific and technological competition with China than on economic and trade relations. Differences in US policy priorities affect China's policy responses, for example, its agenda-setting, resource allocation, and domestic policy adjustments to the bilateral relationship, and, in turn, the future of the bilateral relationship.

Third, the political styles of a Trump or Harris administration are important. Trump has surrounded himself with super hawks that show a great disdain for the Chinese Communist Party that is reflected in their communication style and word choices. Harris, if she continues Biden's style, will likely be relatively restrained on this issue. Therefore, it is not enough to generalize Trump's and Harris' policies toward China by saying that the difference between them is only bad and worse. A more nuanced analysis of the impact of the candidates' policies on all areas of China-US relations is needed now more than ever.

(FONOPs) to assert its right under international law. However, the US has defence agreements with the island nations in the SCS, like Taiwan and the Philippines. Furthermore, the US also conducts regular military exercise and operations with other nations in the region, including Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam. It has security pacts with Japan and South Korea in the East China Sea and has an active military presence in the islands controlled by these two countries. Moreover, it has also complete control over the islands, including the Marshall Islands,

China's authoritarian control over the vast resources of the Indo-Pacific region. All in all, the US-China rivalry in the Indo-Pacific is a complex and multifaceted dynamic, with the game of islands being an aspect of this competition. As the region continues to evolve, new challenges emerge. Therefore, it is likely that the US-China rivalry will endure with significant implications for regional stability and global governance. ■

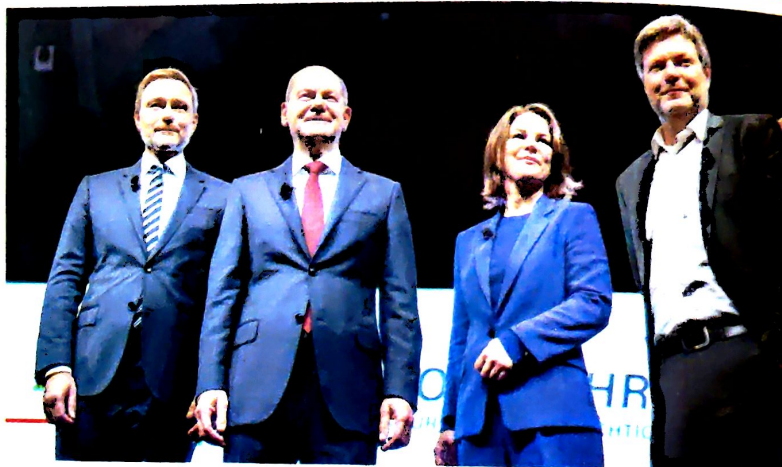
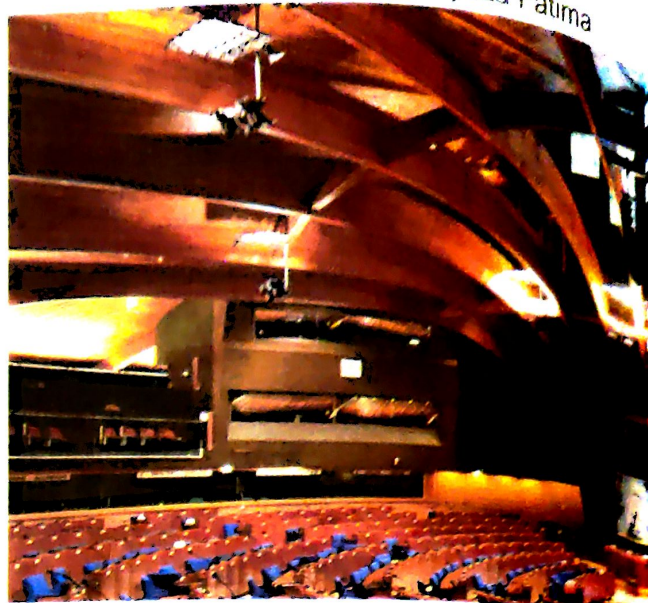
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DOWNSIZING OF THE BUNDESTAG

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The German federal parliament, the Bundestag, is bursting at the seams. Although Chancellor Olaf Scholz's center-left coalition passed a bill to reduce its size from the current 736 to 630 to cut the costs being incurred on running it, the opposition center-right Christian Democrat Union (CSU), the Left Party and others, fearing for their seats, took the law to the Federal Constitutional Court. On July 30, the country's top court (The Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe) essentially approved the electoral law reform but added that a regulation to protect smaller parties must remain in place.

In Germany, there has long been cross-party agreement that the Bundestag, the lower house of the country's parliament, is far too big. With the last general election in 2021, it had ballooned to 736 members, making it larger than any other democratically elected parliament in the world — and very expensive. So, in March 2023, the three ruling parties — the center-left Social Democrats (SPD), the Greens and the neoliberal Free Democrats (FDP) — together passed a new electoral law aiming to limit the size of the lower house of parliament to 630 seats. The opposition parties took the matter to Germany's federal constitutional court which, on July 30, upheld



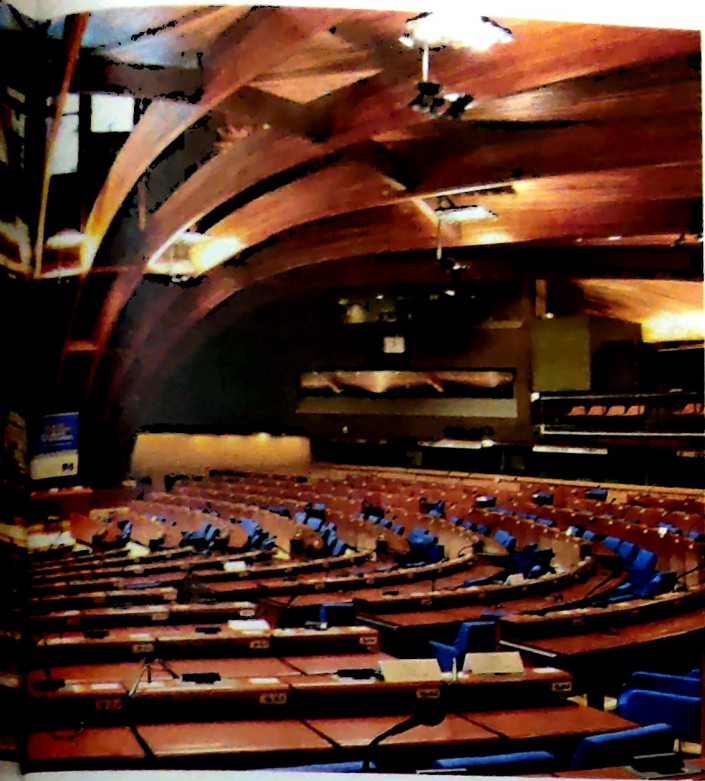
the government's move to downsize the Bundestag with effect from the 2025 federal elections. However, it rejected a change to the system that would have disadvantaged smaller parties in parliamentary elections. In its ruling, the court declared that the reform law to abolish an exception to the 5% rule, a threshold parties must reach to enter the German parliament, is partly unconstitutional. In Germany, the "five percent clause" generally applies to federal and state elections. This hurdle is intended to ensure that not too many small and splinter parties enter the parliament.

What does the law say?

Until now, under Germany's unique mix of direct and proportional representation, if a party won more seats via the direct vote than it would get under the party vote, it would keep the extra seats — but more were added for other parties to ensure their proportional vote is reflected accurately.

That will no longer be the case. Under the new law,

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each party must simply enter the Bundestag with its proportional share of 630 total seats.

Why the downsizing?

The downsizing of the Bundestag was considered necessary as it had grown to a record size of 736 lawmakers after the 2021 election. That's even bigger than the European Parliament, where 720 members from 27 countries represent the entire European Union — The world's largest legislative body is the Chinese National People's Congress, with 2,980 delegates. The steady rise in the number of representatives has raised concerns about the strain imposed on the public coffers, as well as implications for the functional efficiency of the Bundestag.

"This number of parliamentarians creates functional obstacles both for attendance in the plenary and for work in the committees, which cannot be easily overcome in terms of space or personnel," the ruling parties argued in their draft law.

A large majority of Germans also opine that the parliament is too big — and too expensive: The 2023 federal budget earmarked around €1.4 billion (\$1.52 billion), including all ancillary costs, for the Bundestag. Parties across the political spectrum agree that the Bundestag has too many members, but they have disagreed for years on what to do about it. Lawmakers last year approved a plan by Chancellor Olaf Scholz's three-party governing coalition to cap the chamber's size at 630 members starting with the

next general election in September 2025.

How did the Bundestag become so big?

The continuous growth of the Bundestag is due to the country's unique voting system.

Since the country's second quadrennial federal elections of 1953, each voter has exercised two votes, in what is known as the personalised proportional or mixed-member proportional representation system. The first vote is cast to directly choose a candidate from a local constituency via the conventional first-past-the-post method of obtaining a simple majority for a total of 299 seats. Voters simultaneously cast a second ballot to choose a political party for another 299 parliamentary seats, which are distributed across Germany's 16 regions. A party must have secured either 5% of the second vote share or a minimum of three individual constituencies to qualify for entry into parliament. The 5% threshold was stipulated to prevent too many splinter parties from entering the Bundestag. It is the second, that is, the state list vote that determines the relative strength of parties in the Bundestag, because the allocation of seats is proportionate to the number of second votes each party has received.

The conversion of the second votes into seats involves a two-stage process. Each region receives seats in proportion to the population resident therein. These are then distributed among the parties based on their respective share of second votes. The seats for each party at the federal level is subsequently fixed as per the number of seats it won in the state, as well as the number of seats it was entitled to, based on the share of the second vote it received. The higher of the above two figures is the final tally of the party's seats in a region. The cumulative addition of seats across the regions makes up the party's strength in the Bundestag. Through this system, more than 100 parliamentarians entered the Bundestag after the 2021 election.

What will now become of the electoral law reform?

The next federal general election is expected to take place in September 2025. Not much time, therefore, for the government to again adapt its electoral law reform in line with the constitution. The government could, for example, lower the five percent hurdle for representation.

All in all, the governing parties are satisfied with the Constitutional Court's ruling. The opposition CDU/CSU, however, has voiced criticism of the constitutional judges' ruling: it has announced that it will roll back the electoral law reform should the party win next year's election and form the next federal government. ■

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INTERNATIONAL

Dr. M. Usmani

The developments in the Middle East after Oct. 7, 2023, have led to the emergence of a new insecurity wave in the region. A similar situation had been experienced with the onset of the Arab Spring, which significantly altered the strategic environment of the region. Regional actors attempted to move away from the conflicts caused by the Arab Spring through normalization processes that began in 2020 and aimed at creating a new security environment based on cooperation. Now, they find themselves in a new conflictual setting. The rapid escalation of tensions, particularly due to Israel's aggressive stance and its widespread impact across the region, has brought the Middle East to the

policy could involve mobilizing its proxies across the region, including Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen and various Shia militias in Iraq, potentially leading to a broader regional conflict. Already weakened by its civil war, Syria has become a battleground for Israeli-Iranian military conflicts. Israeli airstrikes on Iranian positions in Syria could lead to Syrian military retaliation, further destabilizing the country and drawing it deeper into the conflict. In Yemen, the Houthi movement continues its attacks on shipping lanes in the Gulf of Aden. This exacerbates tensions in the Red Sea and threatens global oil supply routes.

A security environment based on this more heightened turmoil could result in deepened regional instability and many lead to prolonged unrest with multiple conflicts occurring simultaneously. The persistent state of violence undermines the prospects for peace and diplomacy, making effective intervention by regional and international actors difficult.

Meanwhile, the continuation of hostilities exacerbates humanitarian crises, particularly in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria, where civilian casualties and displacement become significant concerns. The security of global energy supplies and maritime routes has become a critical issue, drawing international powers like the United States, Russia and European countries to protect their interests,



brink of a new period of instability. This situation necessitates a re-evaluation of the regional security environment from multiple perspectives. Given the new dynamics created by the current conflict, the region could potentially face three scenarios in the coming years.

1. Worsening security crisis

In this scenario, the region remains caught in a vicious cycle of violence and instability. Israel's ongoing offensive in Gaza has led to constant hostilities, particularly with Hezbollah in Lebanon. This low-intensity conflict is characterized by intermittent missile exchanges, targeted assassinations and cross-border skirmishes.

As the conflicts continue, the risk of direct military confrontation between Israel and Iran increases. Iran's

further complicating the regional dynamics.

In this scenario, Western countries, particularly the US and the European Union, are likely to continue providing strong support to Israel. The US may increase its military and diplomatic support to ensure Israel's security, potentially even deploying more military assets to the region to bolster deterrence.

2. Post-conflict stability

In the event of the cessation of hostilities, the security environment in the Middle East could potentially shift away from confrontation. In this more optimistic scenario, the war in Gaza comes to an end, possibly through a cease-fire brokered by international mediators or as a result of military exhaustion. However, while large-scale hostilities cease, Israel is

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likely to continue conducting targeted operations against Hezbollah and Iranian proxies. Therefore, Israel maintains a strategy of precision strikes, focusing on eliminating key Hezbollah leaders, Iranian Revolutionary Guard commanders and advanced weapon shipments. This approach minimizes large-scale conflict but keeps tensions high.

Regional and international actors such as the UN, the EU and Russia step up efforts to maintain the ceasefire in Gaza and prevent the resurgence of violence. However, the underlying tensions may remain unresolved and the region could revert to a confrontational state. At this point, the most viable option would be to establish a "security guarantee" structure that implements a two-state solution and ensures the existence of a Palestinian state.

This scenario would result in a fragile, temporary truce where violence is controlled but not entirely eradicated. The potential for conflicts remains high, particularly in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, where proxy forces continue to operate.

However, the end of large-scale conflicts could open a window of opportunity for diplomatic efforts, though these are likely to focus on managing the status quo rather than resolving the deeper issues driving the conflict. From a

regional power dynamics perspective, the Iran-Israel rivalry continues in this scenario.

Another aspect is that Western countries, particularly the EU, take on a more active role in supporting peace processes. Emphasizing diplomacy, they encourage the normalization of relations between Israel and Arab states. The US guarantees Israel's security while providing limited support for operations against Iran and Hezbollah.

3. Formation of alliance

In the third scenario, following the end of conflicts, a new regional alliance centered on opposition to Israel's policies emerges. This alliance would include Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia and would be supported by global powers such as Russia and China.

Egypt and Saudi Arabia take on supportive roles in this alliance given their significant regional influence and strategic importance. Their leadership would be driven by both domestic and regional considerations, including their desire to counterbalance Israel's power

and assert their influence in the broader Middle Eastern geopolitical landscape.

Iran, however, remains a key player in this alliance due to its longstanding opposition to Israel and its influence over various non-state armed groups in the region. Yet, Iran's role would be limited by the need to maintain cohesion within the alliance, particularly with states like Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Nevertheless, if Iran would adopt a more moderate policy and refrain from pursuing regional ambitions, it could play a constructive role within the alliance.

The support of Russia and China adds significant geopolitical weight to the alliance. Both countries see the alliance as an opportunity to expand their influence in the Middle East and counter the US dominance. Their support includes diplomatic backing, economic investments and potentially military cooperation, enhancing the alliance's strategic depth.

From a regional and global power dynamics perspective, the formation of this alliance signifies a significant shift in both regional and

global power dynamics. In

response, Israel faces increased diplomatic and military pressure and could seek to strengthen its ties

with the US and European allies to counterbalance the coalition. The

alliance's unified stance on the Palestinian issue leads to renewed international attention and pressure

on Israel to change its policies. The

alliance, strengthened by Russia and China's support, leads to increased economic and military cooperation among its members.

In this scenario, Western countries, particularly the US, may act as a balancing power against the new alliance formed against Israel. The US could strengthen its alliances to ensure Israel's security and increase its military presence in the region. This alliance could create a new area of competition in the Middle East between the West, Russia and China.

Final word

The current trajectory suggests that the region is heading toward prolonged conflict and instability. To avoid this, there is an urgent need for a new security framework that addresses the concerns of all regional actors. □

The writer is a Lahore-based academic.



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At the end of the Cold War, when the USSR fell apart, the world became unipolar, with the United States as the only predominant power. For decades, the US held its superpower status, but this dominance is now being challenged by China. Russia, too, is regaining its role in global politics, pushing the world toward multipolarity. The increasing influence of the Global South is speeding up the shift from a unipolar to a multipolar world. In this new order, there would be no single dominant power, but instead, several major players would share global influence. This shift is happening for several reasons, which are discussed below.

a. Rise of China

In the past 20 years, China has become a major economic and military power. It has the world's second-largest economy, with a GDP of \$18 trillion, and has maintained strong growth. China has also the second-largest military budget. Its influence is

Arabia, South Africa and Brazil, have become important players in global politics. India, now the world's fifth largest economy, has become a major ally of the US in Asia. It balances its relations with all major powers based on its own national interests. Saudi Arabia also keeps balanced ties with major global players. South Africa and Brazil are active members of BRICS, an important group of emerging economies.

d. Formation of Multilateral Organizations

The world is seeing the growth of multilateral organizations, with China, Russia and the US playing leading roles. China and Russia are expanding their influence, while the US is working to contain that. BRICS is leading the shift from a unipolar to a multipolar world and is seen as a counterbalance to the US-led G-7. The US is relying on alliances like QUAD, AUKUS and Chip 4 to counter China's rise.

e. Making and Breaking of Alliances

Beyond Hegemony

The Evolution of a
Multipolar Global Landscape

growing globally, as seen in its role in bringing Saudi Arabia and Iran together. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is helping China become a major global player. These developments have led to a power struggle with the US, which is trying to contain China's influence through alliances like QUAD and AUKUS.

b. Resurgence of Russia

Russia has re-entered global politics with a bang. It launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, attracting many sanctions from the US and the West. In response, Russia started trading in local currencies to avoid US sanctions, speeding up the move away from the US dollar. Russia's trade with China hit a record \$240 billion in 2023, and its trade with the UAE grew by 63% after the outbreak of the Ukraine war. This shows how Russia is working to bypass US sanctions.

c. Increasing Role of the Global South

Countries from the Global South, like India, Saudi

Like every century, alliances are forming and breaking in the 21st century as well. Russia and China have declared a "no-limit friendship," while Russia and North Korea have signed a defence pact. India is getting closer to the US and relying less on Russian military equipment. Saudi Arabia has joined BRICS, increasing its ties with China and Russia. At the same time, China's influence in the Middle East is growing, with China-Arab trade reaching \$432 billion. Finland and Sweden's NATO membership is another step to limit Russia's power.

Conclusion

The world is moving towards a multipolar order. US dominance is being challenged by China and Russia, while countries from the Global South are poised to play a larger role. The expansion of BRICS and changing alliances are reshaping the global power structure, signalling the evolution of a multipolar world. ■

The writer is a law student and a CSS aspirant.

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Taliban's Morality Law

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Promoting Virtue or Systematizing Gender Apartheid?

Dr. Sidra Muqet

Recently, the Taliban announced a new law on the "Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice" which imposes its interpretation of Shariah on the people of Afghanistan. The new law sets up rules for everyday life and adds to the litany of restrictions on women. It not only bans women from showing any part of their bodies or faces in public but also silences their voices. It also seeks to regulate many aspects of daily life, from music and games, to travel, dress and sexual practices. The law also sets out graduated punishments that morality police are empowered to dole out – from verbal warnings to threats, fines and detentions of varying lengths.

As a part of the new so-called Vice and Virtue decree, Taliban in Afghanistan ordered, on August 21, 2024, fresh limitations on women, forbidding them from singing, reciting poetry or speaking aloud in public and mandating them to keep their faces and bodies covered at all times. The 35-article document is the first formal declaration of the vice and virtue laws under the Taliban's strict

interpretation of Islamic Shariah law since they regained power in Afghanistan in 2021. The decree greatly restricts personal freedoms and religious practices, covering aspects of everyday life such as transportation, music, shaving, celebrations and women's behaviour and appearance in public.

What does the law say?

The 114-page document makes it mandatory for a woman to veil her entire body at all times in public, and deems a face covering as "essential to avoid temptation and tempting others".

Here are its key provisions:

a. Restrictions on women's behaviour and appearance

Article 13 of the law is particularly focused on women, imposing strict regulations on their behaviour and appearance, including:

» **Mandatory full-body coverage:** Women are required to cover their entire bodies at all times.

» **Face covering:** Women must cover their faces to prevent "fitna" (temptation).

» Prohibition on women's voices:

Prohibition on women's voices: Women are forbidden from singing, reciting poetry or reading



aloud in public, as their voices are considered "awrah," or the intimate parts of the human body.

- » **Clothing requirements:** Women's clothing must not be thin, short or tight.
- » **Segregation from non-mahram men:** Muslim women must conceal their bodies and faces from men who are not their *mahram* (close male relatives).
- » **Avoidance of non-Muslim women:** Muslim women are instructed to avoid non-Muslim or "immoral" women to prevent corruption.
- » **Gaze prohibition:** Men and women are forbidden from looking at each other's bodies or faces.
- » **Mandatory covering when leaving the home:** Women must cover their voices, faces and bodies whenever they leave their homes.

b. Media and public content regulations

The law extends the *muttawins*' control over media and public content. Article 17, Section 3, prohibits the publication of images of living beings, which could lead to the shutdown of television channels, digital media and print newspapers that rely on visual content - This raises significant concerns about the future of media in Afghanistan, where visual imagery is central to news and communication.

c. Public transportation and music bans

Article 19 imposes strict rules on public transportation, banning the playing of music, transporting unveiled women, the mixing of unrelated men and women and the transportation of women without a male guardian. Drivers and passengers are also required to perform prayers at designated times. These measures further restrict women's mobility and access to public life.

d. Additional prohibitions

Article 22 introduces a series of additional prohibitions, including:

Ban on tape recorders and radios: The use of tape recorders, radios and similar devices is restricted, especially when they broadcast women's voices or

music outside of private homes.

Prohibition on viewing images and videos: Viewing images and videos of living beings on computers, mobile phones or other devices is banned.

Prohibition on shaving beards: Shaving beards or trimming them beyond a fistful is forbidden, though the law does not specify what constitutes an "Islamic" hairstyle.

Ban on cultural celebrations: The law forbids the celebration of cultural holidays such as Nowruz and Yalda, as well as the wearing of neckties and other non-Islamic symbols.

How will it be enforced?

Enforcement is tasked to morality police, called Muhtasib, from the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. The morality police are authorized to mete out discretionary punishment, including up to three days in prison. They can give warnings before imprisoning offenders for durations from one hour to three days, and it also may seize properties as a penalty, if considered appropriate. They can compel people to revere Islamic symbols and check phones and laptops to ensure there are no images of living beings. They can also ensure that women's voices or music do not emanate from homes or gatherings.

Previous strictures

Since ousting US-led troops in 2021, the Taliban government has intermittently announced social curbs with an emphasis on separating men and women.

- » Many of those previous orders overlap with the new law and were already in effect.
- » Girls have long been banned from secondary school, and women from universities. Women travelling were previously ordered to be chaperoned by a family member and to cover themselves from head to toe in public.
- » Prayer at set times has been deemed obligatory while music in public and gambling have been

What is gender apartheid?

Gender apartheid refers to the systemic oppression, discrimination and segregation of a specific group based on gender. Rooted in the Afrikaans word for apart, the term apartheid was first used to define the social system that privileged South Africa's minority white population and physically separated it from other races from 1948 to 1994. The term gender apartheid arose in academic and advocacy discourse in the 1980s to describe the newly-established Islamic Republic of Iran and the Taliban government in Afghanistan at that time. Under conservative, Shariah-based laws, both had begun implementing a strict regime of sex segregation.

Gender apartheid has no formal legal definition, but organized efforts to codify the act are gaining momentum as more Afghan women and girls see their rights eroded by another Taliban regime.



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outlawed.

- » Segregation of men and women is already required in most public places. Adultery, homosexuality and drug addiction have also been previously banned.
- » However, the new document is the most comprehensive manifesto of the Taliban's vision for society since their return and outlines graduated punishments morality police can dole out.

What conditions do Afghan women face under the Taliban rule?

The Taliban's return to power brought a slew of new constraints on women and girls that the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, calls an "unprecedented deterioration of women's rights."

Since then, the Taliban have issued more than 80 edicts targeting the twenty million women and girls who make up just short of 50 percent of Afghanistan's population. Women and girls face draconian restrictions in public life, namely, on education, employment, access to the justice system and activities and travel outside the home. These include prohibitions on education beyond sixth grade, veiling



and dress codes enforceable by the morality police and bans on leaving the house without a mahram, a male relative chaperone. According to news reports, repressions are only deepening and the Taliban have resumed the practice of corporal punishment, including stoning, flogging and execution.

The Taliban justify these policies as adherence to a strict interpretation of Islamic law. They claim that removing women from public space and society demonstrates the "purity" of the regime under Shariah.

Criticism

Taliban 2.0 are not learning any lessons and they are in a

mindset of their own, which is neither Islamic nor progressive. This regressive attitude has brought miseries for Afghan society. The recent decree confirms that there is hardly any difference of thought from the yesteryear Mullah Omer to today's reclusive Haibatullah Akhundzada. The predominant Muslim society is being led down the slide, and enforcement of stringent regulations in the name of religion is an antithesis of progression. The new laws once again prove that the Taliban leaders have failed to keep their word with the international community for ushering in an inclusive government and enabling civil liberties. The newly announced codification of laws goes on to explicitly mention the decorum of society on behaviour and lifestyle. Though the claim is that they are based on Shariah injunctions, many beg to differ at home and in the Muslim world at large. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, an intergovernmental organization comprising mostly Muslim-majority countries, and other experts highlight how such restrictions are not explicitly dictated in the Quran; they argue that the Taliban has instituted a regime of gender apartheid that reflects conservative cultural biases justified by an extremist interpretation of Islamic law.

Those restrictions are surely not in sync with the great religion of Islam that bestows emancipation of mankind and equal rights for women. But Afghan dictum says that a special morality police will regulate virtue and vice in society and strict punishments will be doled out to violators.

Prohibitions like driving, playing music and



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transporting unveiled women or women in the presence of men who are without a mahram simply cement the culture of otherness. Though some of the tenets, such as the ban on homosexuality, adultery and gambling, are welcome in any conservative society, going a step ahead by suspecting the conduct of womenfolk as they go on to use phones and undertake professions in art and culture is overstepping rationality. Taliban 2.0 are in need of revisiting these diktats for erecting a forward-looking society.

Analysis

With the new law, the Taliban are on track to take the country back to the norms of their late 1990s rule. It is, however, unknown how the moral police will find out about people's private lives. Moreover, although some violations are clearly defined, how will they determine what qualifies as "immoral" and thus punishable?

The law is a clear gimmick by the Taliban to strengthen their power by imposing strict laws on the people of Afghanistan whose condition is already deplorable. Even though the law has been condemned by the international community, the enactment of such a law was expected to come sooner or later. The Taliban have been essentially granted immunity by the international community, as demonstrated by the US agreement in Doha in 2020 and the most recent Doha Process. The Taliban are aware of their political power. Since the global community is more reactive than proactive, the regime in Kabul has been strategically

using their proactiveness in their favour which further affirms their rule. The Taliban regime in Kabul has long proved to be irremovable, despite internal as well as external pressure. After the initial pressure to form an inclusive government, the international community has been gradually backtracking from that position, which is evident in the recent development of ties between the Taliban and several countries, including China, India, the United Arab Emirates,



Russia, Pakistan, Nicaragua, Turkiye and the countries in Central Asia. Although short of "formal" recognition, these ties are to the Taliban an effective recognition of their power over the people of Afghanistan.

Despite these ties, the Taliban will not change their course of action within the country. Afghans, in particular girls and women, are likely to suffer more under the Taliban's increasingly draconian rule.

The recently enacted law will further worsen conditions for the common people in the country whose everyday public and private life will be prone to privacy breaches by the Ministry of Virtue and Vice's moral police. For the de-facto rulers of Kabul, this further strengthens their political power as they compel people to abide by unjust laws imposed by an unelected regime.

Conclusion

The new law marks a continuation of the increasing miseries of the Afghan people. Ever since they took over Kabul three years ago, the Taliban have been enforcing their brand of Shariah, like they did during their earlier stint in power (1996-2001), as the foremost matter of state policy. Women, in particular, have borne the brunt of this. They have already been forbidden to receive education beyond the primary level. Only a small number of occupations are open to them, subject to severe limitations. The latest restrictions underscore a significant increase in the



From today, the sounds of women's voices are banned in Afghanistan.

Taliban's attempts to enforce their version of Islamic law, especially in suppressing and removing women from public life. The debate can be concluded aptly in the words of UN rights chief, Volker Türk, who said that the intensifying curbs on women are "propelling Afghanistan further down a path of isolation, pain and hardship. It would also jeopardize the country's future by massively stifling its development." □

The writer is a London-based academic.

Zohaib Hassan

International institutions have long analyzed the global and regional risks that affect, and will continue to affect, the world economy and global trade. Until 2020, global climate change was the number one risk in global analyses, while the second and third on the list were cyber security and geopolitical instability. The threats of a possible global pandemic ranked eighth, and new security-related threats ranked ninth. The two topics that were at the bottom of the global threat rankings happened one after the other: Covid-19 and the Russia-Ukraine War, two 'black swans' that shook the world economy and global trade. Today, the crisis in the Middle East, rising tensions in the Asia-Pacific and the Russia-Ukraine War are the top three threats to the world economy and global trade. The deepening international and regional conflicts also threaten the course of global commodity prices. Therefore, the range of fluctuations in global energy prices, precious metals' prices and even agricultural products and food prices may widen. This is precisely the point that puts the world's leading central banks in a dilemma. Should they adopt a new course in monetary policy to counter the negative impact of international and regional geopolitical threats and uncertainties on production, trade, exports and investments, or should they remain cautious in the face of a global inflation bubble that could re-accelerate? From Keynesian to neoliberal, opinions will, of course, differ. After all, in the analysis of global risk headlines, the threat of global inflation and the threat of a tightening in the supply

chain go hand in hand in the current geopolitical environment. The serious volatility observed in international markets over the recent weeks is a distant memory when compared to other risk headlines. However, the real threat between now and 2030 is geopolitical fragmentation exacerbated by the shaken credibility of multilateral international organizations. The lack of trust among the world's leading economies is not only crushing the hopes of finding solutions to global problems together; it is also intensifying the search for 'protectionism' as an aggravating problem. The rise of protectionism is the biggest threat to global trade. Therefore, restoring mutual trust among leading countries and strengthening the prestige and credibility of multilateral international organizations are the most crucial issues for the next five years of the world economy and global trade. Otherwise, we risk a very dark global economic outlook in 2030. If that future materializes, how will the world economy find sustainable solutions to the global debt vortex and the climate crisis in 2030? It is not even possible to think of sustainable solutions to the threat of cybersecurity, exacerbated by developments in the field of artificial intelligence, which even the governments of leading economies do not know how to regulate, or to the possible effects of global migration and ageing on global population and employment. ■

The writer is a student.

The world faces ongoing geopolitical turbulence, including conflicts, with 2023 marking the largest-ever single-year rise in forcibly displaced people. In addition to these security challenges, the world faces a warming planet and fragile global economy that can only be addressed through joint action. Despite this daunting picture, there are ways the international community can still work together. To address challenges in global security, climate change, emerging technology and trade, the international community must prioritize diverse voices and involve actors that have previously been on the margins of multilateral fora.

A Dark Future of Geopolitical Fragmentation



INTERNATIONAL

THE TRIAL OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

THE RISE OF DISTRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

Homo sapiens, the only surviving member of the genus Homo, were weak, puny creatures without any sharp claws, talons or piercing canines, lacking all the characteristics of the apex predators. Survival of the fittest through Natural Selection would have rendered humans extinct a long time ago. But they found a loophole in nature, the phenomenon of Group Selection whereby, species having slim chances of surviving on the basis of their individual characteristics gathered around each other to maximize security and group survival. Humans ever since, seek the comfort and protection of groups and organize themselves into groups. Today, they outnumber almost all other species on the planet Earth due to their ability to develop vast networks of communication based on trust.

From Cave to Cape: Expanding the network of trust

In the beginning, social interactions were heavily dominated by kinship ties. Only those who shared your blood or cave could be trusted. Hunter-gatherers soon had to turn to pastoral and agricultural mode of living. Accordingly, humans changed their social and ecological niche, which required them to expand their network of trust to include others beyond their kin.

Trust is an invisible social cohesive force often originating from shared past, traditions, values, rituals and stories that makes social life possible.

It is, in fact, trust that makes us social animals in the true sense. This same trust, with time, got codified

into institutions which are nothing but recurring patterns of social behaviour. From the earliest institutions of family, property and inheritance to modern public and private institutions, humans have come a long way and so has the trust that made all this possible.

The digital age of disruption and misinformation has affected man's inherent ability to trust the very institutions that it had created in the first place to regulate those recurring patterns. The result is a worldwide trend of public distrust in the institutions, especially the political institutions, including the state. US, the flag-bearer of liberal democracy, according to a survey, reported a 71% decline in trust in the institution of Congress, a 20% decline in the Supreme Court and a whopping 26% decline in the institution of the Presidency in just 24 years.

Following the rabbit to the hole: Drivers of the declining trend

Trust can be horizontal or vertical and unfortunately, both are on a decline worldwide, and in Pakistan as well. The question arises here: what could be the driving force of the rising distrust in the institutions when we are the very creators of these, to begin with? Political scientists believe that trust is the function of Evident Restraint and Evident Competence. Competence is simply the ability to do one's core work, whatever it is. Vertical distrust is rising because the elites, politicians and institutions, especially in the case of Pakistan's political spectrum, have failed to back their claims with stringent actions. They have failed to prove that they serve the interests of society at large, but are rather seen as indifferent to public grievances and pursuing their interests by holding political offices. Similarly, trust develops not just because a particular person or institution has more skills than an ordinary person, but due to the fact and belief that they are bound by institutional codes, conducts and structural boundaries that they will not cross. It doesn't seem the case anymore. For example, in Pakistan, there is the politicization of every elite and almost every institution is busy in political scoring, and if vested with even the tiniest of authority, in one way or another, it is dragged into political debate. They can't be trusted with what they are doing or what they are supposed to do; rather, they are seen to be doing a bit of everything. Our institutions no longer provide for restraints on the people within to protect the larger public interest but are rather reduced to just providing them a platform to raise themselves in social standing and

gain prominence in the corridors of power. Institutions are more like a stage now where the officials stand, brandish themselves, and yell out the issue of the day. They are platforms for them to perform rather than work.

Currency of political life: Importance of trust

People's trust in anything; be it the system, institutions or the state itself, is the secret ingredient for a free society, because it's essential to see and understand that political institutions are there for us, to serve us and pursue the interest of the society as a whole. It's critical for a free society because only in it does the general will of the people rule.

Trust is a sine qua non for democracy to work, i.e. for any one of us to submit to the democratic majority, it's pertinent that we believe that there are structures and institutions that will protect us from the abuse of the majority rule and that whatever these institutions will do, will be for the common interest of the public. This US, WE, the first plural pronoun, is the glue that sticks us together, that makes us part of a larger group. People have lost the ability to be a part of IN GROUP or to use the first plural pronoun when we talk about society, state or institutions. In Pakistan's political life, it has initiated a new war of US vs. THEM. The institutions are no longer seen to be serving US but rather serving the interests of the elites and politicians, the THEM. These institutions are believed to be empowering THEM, not US. The sense of isolation, alienation and an environment of conspiracies that are considered some mysterious symptoms of a social crisis we are going through, are rather the underlying causes of this loss of trust in institutions.

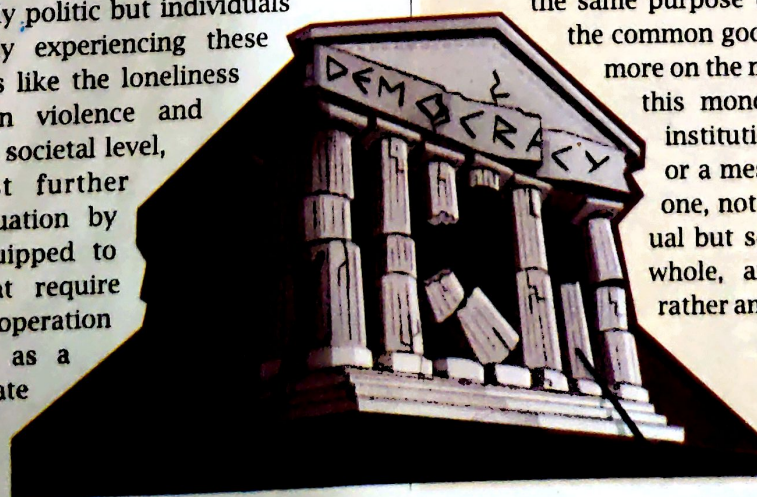
Declining trust in our institutions is affecting and will continue to affect the citizens in the most negative ways. On an individual level, studies show that distrust, whether horizontal or vertical, increases up to 60% the risk of premature death from social disconnection and is comparable to smoking daily. It will not be affecting just body politic but individuals too. We are already experiencing these negative externalities like the loneliness epidemic, a rise in violence and extremism, etc. On a societal level, the rising distrust further exacerbates the situation by rendering us ill-equipped to solve problems that require interdependency, cooperation and coming of us as a whole like the climate crisis, social crisis, social inequalities, poverty, etc.

"When we are atomized, when we are alone, we are vulnerable and unable to create a compartment, a platform to contain and understand the problem in its essence."

Distrust has hampered our ability to make a judgement because we are exposed to all forms of information, propaganda and lies, especially on social media. It creates bewilderment in the public and makes us sift through the grey and black lies, which is not only time-consuming but also causes cognitive exhaustion. Political psychologists believe that it will be rampant and will not stop just there; rather, it will compromise an individual's ability to make a judgement about information, a sort of cognitive degeneration. Moreover, these social disconnections also lead to a willingness to adopt false information and disrupt the way we solve conflicts, e.g. People now doubt the justice system too because they are not sure if there is a bias involved or if the institutions can be trusted. Apart from that, it has also produced large-scale political polarization, a general uncertainty about the prediction of how the political institutions or the public institutions are supposed to behave and work. To conclude, people learn more easily from pictures and stories than from facts and stats because a filter bubble is hard, if not impossible, to maintain in this digital age of disinformation where everything is reduced to clicks. Changing these images in people's minds and kind of going for a holistic restoration of public trust in the institutions will not come overnight; it would rather take much more time. Experimentation with liberal democracy is the only way forward. Large-scale structural reforms, the introduction of newer and innovative models of co-democracy with a focus on participatory budgeting, people assemblies, increased transparency and enhanced accountability can help us restore our lost trust in the institutions. There's also a dire need to insert hooks and levers in decision-makers, ensuring that these institutions are used for the same purpose they were created for, i.e. the common good. The responsibility falls

more on the media as to how it presents this monolith - the state and its institutions - as either a monster or a messiah. The issue is a grave one, not just affecting an individual but society and the world as a whole, and would soon become rather an existential one. ■

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NATIONAL



Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan by area, covering almost 43 percent of the total area of the country. It is also the richest yet, unfortunately, least developed in terms of natural resources.

The geostrategic location of Balochistan adds to its significance for Pakistan, as it is located on the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East. This province has a 723-mile-long international border with Afghanistan in the northwest and a 520-mile-long border with Iran in the west. It has a coastline of around 750 kilometres with the Arabian Sea. Its location and presence of abounding natural resources in its soil make it a battleground of intelligence warfare between hostile intelligence agencies (HIAs) and the state authorities. The tribal system is cited as a major factor that obstructs infrastructure development in Balochistan. Sardars and Nawabs hinder the building of educational infrastructure and empowerment of Baloch

youth, which would be a threat to their hegemony and concentration of power in their hands. Widespread corruption and bad governance in the province make things worse. These are the things for which Islamabad or the federal government cannot be blamed.



There is a division of A and B areas in Balochistan as far as policing is concerned. Around 18 percent of the total area of Balochistan is under the control of the police, whereas the remaining 82 percent is policed by the Levies, which is placed under the control of the Deputy Commissioner in the respective district. Eighteen percent of the area that comes under the jurisdiction of police is called the 'A' area, and the area under

the jurisdiction of Levies and the DC is called the 'B' area. 'A' area constitutes urban settlements, whereas 'B' area has rural and scattered populations. There is a dire need to increase the quality of training of both the Levies and the police. Coordination issues between

Challenges of Law and Order in Balochistan

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both the law-enforcement agencies (LEAs) should be resolved.

Balochistan faces both terrorism and insurgency. Though insurgency involves terrorist tactics, it is different from terrorism as far as the objectives of both are concerned. Insurgency involves a group of rebels and militants, who engage the state authorities in a prolonged conflict, mix with the civilian population and try to increase their support base. Their ultimate aim is to establish a new political order and have control over a certain territory. Terrorism involves the use of violent means to spread fear among the masses so as to compel the state to fulfil their demands.

Balochistan is a victim of both menaces. Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is largely active in the Zhob division, whose borders meet with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, whereas Baloch insurgency is prevalent in the Baloch-dominated areas, particularly Makran division. Insurgency in Balochistan is spearheaded by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), a terrorist and militant organization based in Afghanistan.

The BLA carries out its terrorist activities against the Pakistan armed forces, LEAs, civilians belonging to other ethnic groups, particularly Punjabis, and foreign nationals in Balochistan.

The group is said to have been founded in 2000, and it started its terrorist activities in Balochistan in the same year, even before the killing of Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti. This goes against the very popular opinion held by a group of intelligentsia who think that things took an ugly turn in Balochistan after August 26, 2005, when Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti was killed by the security forces in Dera Bugti. The BLA started violent activities against non-Baloch

minorities in Balochistan in 2004. They set 'separation of Balochistan from Pakistan' as their agenda.

The BLA was declared a terrorist organization by Pakistan on April 7, 2006, because of its violent activities against the security forces and non-Baloch civilians. The United States and the United Kingdom have also included BLA in the list of proscribed

organizations. However, the UK also gave refuge to BLA leader Hyrbyair Marri despite Pakistan's protest. Interestingly, he also secured the portfolio of provincial communication minister of Balochistan in 2000. He himself denies being the leader of BLA. His father, Khair Bakhsh Marri, started his political career in 1970, when he was elected as a Member of the National Assembly (MNA) from Balochistan. He opposed the oil and gas exploration by the government in the Marri-dominated areas. He joined the 1970s insurgency against the state and went in exile to Afghanistan, where he spent more than a decade. Khair Bakhsh had to end his exile and return to Pakistan in the 1990s after a political change in Afghanistan as the USSR-backed government of Mohammad Najibullah fell. It is wrong to suggest that the state did not try to pacify the Baloch tribal chiefs. Khair Bakhsh spent his last two decades in Pakistan and died in Karachi in 2014. His other son, Balach Marri, remained head of the BLA. He was killed in November 2007 in Afghanistan in a NATO airstrike.

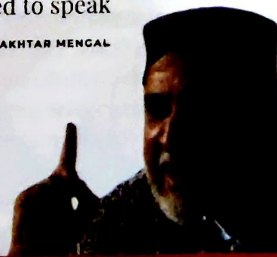
There is no denying that the relationship between the state and citizens is based on a social contract in which both the state and the citizenry are tied in a bond of rights and duties towards each other. It is the right of the state to explore and utilize the natural resources falling within its territorial jurisdiction. No tribe or the tribal chief can be allowed to claim right over these



“Don't apologize to me—apologize to the people of Balochistan.

Acknowledge the pain you've caused by taking their loved ones. **Say sorry to Sami and Mahrang** for assaulting them when they simply wanted to speak

— SARDAR AKHTAR MENGAL



resources. However, on the other side, it is also the duty of the state to provide basic facilities of life to all its citizens and distribute the dividends among all the provinces equitably.

Balochistan has also been a victim of sectarianism. Persons belonging to the Hazara community are regularly targeted. Additionally, the mountainous, rugged terrain makes it difficult for the LEAs and the security forces to effectively control the situation and chase and apprehend the outlaws. Challenges of law and order in



Allah Almighty, it can survive even greater challenges.

The HIAs play their part in igniting the anti-state feelings, particularly in Baloch youth, in order to fulfil their nefarious design of destabilizing Pakistan. It is in the best interest of Baloch youth that they do not pay heed to anti-Pakistan slogans. They should work hard and focus on their studies. The government of

Balochistan has announced foreign scholarships for the students of the province. Instead of being part of an insurgency that has no future, they should be part of the

The Balochistan Conundrum

The recent spate of attacks in Balochistan suggests a level of planning and execution that warrants a much more thorough investigation. This includes improving inter-agency cooperation and deploying advanced technology to pre-empt and prevent future attacks. Security forces must be equipped and trained to deal with the unique challenges posed by the insurgency in Balochistan, with a focus on protecting all citizens, regardless of their ethnicity or background. However, it is important to distinguish between groups – the separatist militants do not represent the oppressed and marginalized Baloch which is why not all of Balochistan's woes can be resolved through force. The state must ensure that counterterrorism operations do not further alienate the local population. Any such missteps would only reinforce the narrative of those who seek to undermine the state. The state must engage in dialogue with Baloch nationalist leaders who represent the true aspirations of the Baloch people. This dialogue should be aimed at addressing their grievances, particularly those related to political autonomy, resource distribution, and human rights. The PPP, under whose government the Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan package and the 18th Amendment were introduced, should leverage its political experience to facilitate meaningful discussions that can lead to lasting solutions. The root of Balochistan's unrest lies in a deep-seated trust deficit between the province's residents and the state. This distrust has been cultivated over decades, fuelled by a perception that the federal government dismisses the grievances of smaller provinces like Balochistan. The very essence of Pakistan as a federation is to ensure equal rights and autonomy for all provinces, yet Balochistan remains a stark example of unfulfilled promises. The government must prioritize development projects that create jobs, improve infrastructure, and provide essential services like healthcare and education. Special attention should be given to ensuring that these projects benefit the local population directly, thereby reducing feelings of marginalization. Accountability must also be a cornerstone of any strategy moving forward. This means not only bringing the perpetrators of violence to justice but also ensuring accountability for any human rights violations committed in the province. In turn, Baloch leaders too need to show that they unequivocally stand with the state against violence and terror of any kind. We essentially need a dual approach in Balochistan: a relentless crackdown on terrorist and militant elements and a sincere, committed effort to address the long-standing grievances of the Baloch people.

Balochistan are complex and multifaceted. The state should explore out-of-the-box solutions to resolve the crisis. On the one hand, political channels and negotiation should be used as tools in order to streamline the peaceful population, while on the other, intelligence-based operations (IBOs) should be conducted against the insurgents.

There is a dire need to tell the Baloch youth that independent and separate Balochistan is neither possible nor sustainable, keeping in view the military capacity of the Pakistani army, which is responsible for maintaining integration of the country and the geographical location of Balochistan. Pakistan has exceptional endurance capacity and, by the grace of

plan for peaceful Balochistan and prosperous Pakistan. Additionally, a strong and efficient local government system based on true democratic aspirations should be introduced in Balochistan. Adequate resources and funds should be placed at the disposal of office-holders of the LG system so that they are able to deliver at the grassroots level and provide basic facilities to the general public. In this way, the issues of bad governance and deprivation of the people can be addressed. ■

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NATIONAL

Bilal Hassan



Pakistan has implemented several laws, which could be considered a legal framework for regulation and supporting e-commerce activities, while also combating e-frauds. The consumer protection laws

include the Islamabad Consumer Protection Act, 1995; the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Consumer Protection Act, 1997; the Balochistan Consumer Protection Act, 2003; the Punjab Consumer Protection Act, 2005; and the Sindh Consumer Protection Act, 2014, for protecting and preserving consumer rights and interests essential to maintaining a fair and equitable marketplace. These laws prescribe rules for product labelling, quality standards of products, price controls and the establishment of consumer protection courts and tribunals. The Copyright Ordinance of 1962, the Patents Ordinance of 2000, the Registered Designs Ordinance 2000, and the Trademarks Ordinance of 2001 have been implemented for protection of intellectual property rights to foster business innovations essential for economic growth and development. To deal with cybercrimes, Pakistan has implemented the Electronic Transaction Ordinance, 2002 (ETO 2002), and the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016 (PECA 2016). The cybercrimes, along with e-commerce frauds, are investigated, and persons involved are prosecuted by the Cyber Crime Wing of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). The ETO 2002 provides a firm basis upon which future e-commerce could be raised and flourished.

The implementation of PECA 2016 provides legal support for digital operations in Pakistan. Its provisions prohibit and permit user activities concerning the use of the Internet and digital operations. It includes provisions for preventing cybercrimes such as hacking, identity theft and cyberterrorism, as well as electronic forgery and electronic fraud. Besides, there are consumer courts, which resolve disputes between consumers and online businesses. Among other factors, increasing internet penetration is playing a crucial role in the rapid expansion of the e-

commerce sector in Pakistan. Internet penetration stood at 46% in 2024, with 111 million Internet users. The government has invested in the expansion of 3G and 4G technology across Pakistan and has also provided incentives to private companies to expand broadband access in rural areas, which is helping in widening the customer base and expanding e-commerce. Mobile subscribers are 189 million, or 78% of the population, and 3G/4G subscribers stood at 136 million. As a result, there is an increasing trend in online shopping due to the convenience and availability of products on e-platforms. E-commerce transactions have increased from 5.7 million in 2019 to 45.5 million in 2022. E-commerce transactions had grown by 108% in volume in 2023 compared to the previous

Strengthening the e-Commerce Sector



year. Further, the value of e-commerce transactions has also been continuously increasing at a steady pace, with a 34% increase in 2023 over 2022.

The population figures from the 7th Population and Housing Census-2023 show that Pakistan's population is 244 million, growing at an annual rate of 2.55%. About 60% of its population is in the age group between 15 and 29 years, providing enormous human and knowledge capital for the e-commerce market and making them potential online shoppers.

Interventions by the government have been playing a pivotal role in promoting e-commerce. This is evident from establishing a legal framework, including the launch of the E-Commerce Policy Framework in 2019, for the protection of online consumers and businesses. Further, the government has adopted measures such as simplifying the taxation regime, improving the logistics infrastructure and facilitating e-commerce entrepreneurs through training and support to create a conducive environment for bolstering e-commerce. The government has also adopted the Digital Pakistan Policy 2019 and the digital payment initiative to create a conducive environment for e-commerce businesses to grow through an e-banking framework. The cybercrime wing of the FIA is dealing with cybercrimes and making efforts to prevent cyberattacks for protection of interests and rights of consumers and sellers operating in the e-commerce sector.

There are about 72 million active social media users in Pakistan by January 2024. About 39% of the total population aged 18 and above (54.38 million) are using social media. Importantly, about 65% of total internet users used at least one social media platform. This could be an important explanation why social media platforms are widely used in Pakistan, and why so many businesses have leveraged these platforms to reach potential customers. Nearly 61% of people have smartphones. In 2024, estimated users of Facebook stood at 45 million, YouTube users at 72 million, Instagram users at 17 million, Snapchat users at 30 million, and TikTok users at 54 million.

During 2023, e-banking transactions contributed to 85% of total payments, while the remaining 15% were paper-based transactions. In 2022, e-banking and paper-based transactions were 80% and 20%, respectively, which indicates that customers are gradually adopting digital channels for processing transactions. Over 2,073 million e-banking transactions were processed compared to 1,612 million as compared to 374 million and 392 million paper-based transactions in 2023 and 2022, respectively. Digital payment

solutions such as JazzCash and Easypaisa are gaining popularity in Pakistan.

Pakistan has a limited Internet penetration rate of around 46% of the total population in January 2024, and nearly 54% of the population is offline. Despite progress, as internet users increased by 24 million (27%) between January 2023 and January 2024, internet access, especially in rural areas, remains limited, hindering e-commerce growth. As a result, e-commerce activities are largely concentrated in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad, and spread of e-commerce towards rural areas is negligible.

In e-commerce, payment for online transactions is critical and is dependent upon a number of factors. CoD (cash on delivery) covered the largest share, with 100% of all online stores offering this payment method in 2023. This is because of limited payment options and concerns about security and trust issues surrounding the customers. Cash payment is the most popular mode of payment. This is because of limited payment options and concerns about security and trust issues surrounding the customers. For e-commerce transactions, this provides evidence of the non-availability of proper infrastructure for online payment. Paypal is a popular and trusted payment gateway, more commonly used by traders around the world, but this service is not available in Pakistan due to the high cost of entry and other issues such as money laundering. Limited digital payment gateways and credit card users are hindering e-commerce growth. The major difficulty in promoting cross-border e-commerce among youth is the problem associated with getting payment because the youth has to fill out multiple forms for getting USD 200 and after making as many as three trips to the SBP. The delivery system is found to have a significant correlation with e-commerce adoption. Logistics in Pakistan is also fragmented and makes the delivery system inefficient and unreliable. Traffic congestion and dilapidated road infrastructure are factors contributing to



delivery delays, ergo customer dissatisfaction. Moreover, inconsistent product quality, packaging and pricing of products signifies a lack of standardization, hurting customers' trust and is a major impediment to establishing a trust-based economic system, essential to providing a better market environment for merchants and purchasers.

Breach of security of personal information used in e-commerce transactions is cited as one of the leading factors for hampering the growth of e-commerce and adversely affects e-commerce sales and revenue by discouraging people to shop online. Online fraud and theft of personal data are being faced by consumers and businesses in e-commerce.

E-commerce platforms often lack a wide range of products, which limits customer choices. High costs of delivery, especially for remote or rural areas, is also hampering e-commerce expansion. Poor customer service leads to dissatisfaction and lost sales. This is because of the lack of several players in the market, which is dominated by a few companies. High logistics costs are the major weakness associated with cross-border e-commerce, hampering e-commerce growth. Overall literacy rate in Pakistan is low, contributing to limited understanding of online shopping and digital payments among consumers. Further, lack of skilled workforce is hindering smooth running and expansion of e-commerce businesses. Reasons behind low digital literacy include lack of infrastructure, limited availability of telecommunication/Internet services, non-familiarity with digital devices and low literacy rate.

Limited digital literacy also affects the selection of payment methods for e-commerce transactions. The e-commerce businesses are offering different payment methods for e-commerce transactions, such as e-payment through Visa or Mastercard or bank transfers and cash on delivery. In 2023, the Pakistani



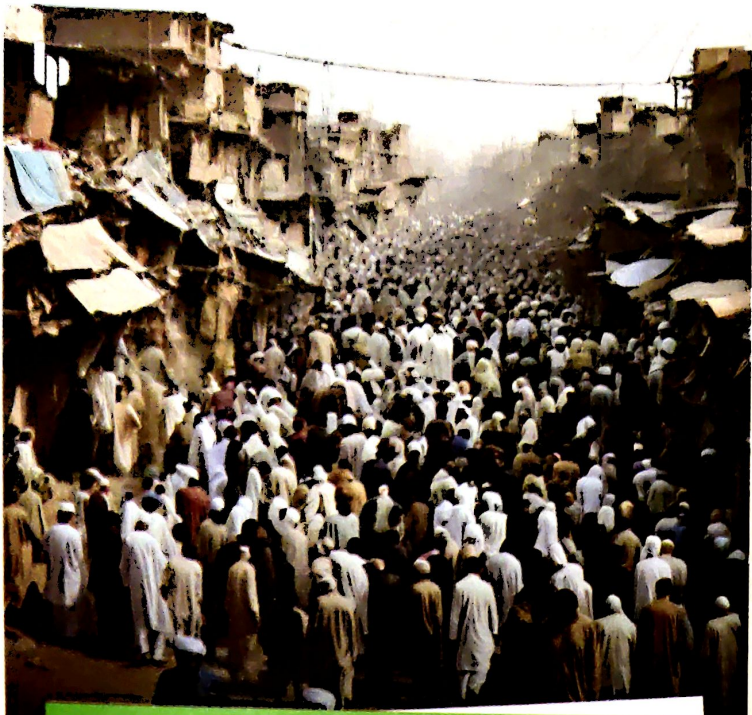
e-commerce market remained fragmented in terms of payment methods offered. CoD covered the largest share, with 100% of all online stores offering this payment method because over 60% of people do not trust online payment systems. Visa (Cards) with 75.4%, MasterCard (Cards) with 72.1%, and bank transfer with 49.4% were other payment methods in the Pakistani fashion e-commerce market in 2023.

Buyers' trust deficit, data security concerns and preference to check products first, as well as, sellers' preference to avoid bank charges, to gain the trust of buyers, and to

increase the customer base, are reasons for the prevalence of CoD payment methods in the country. High reliance on cash on delivery can potentially lead to payment issues and disputes and is, therefore, termed an undesirable way of doing e-commerce businesses.

There are multiple taxes on IT products, which increase the cost of production for businesses and are major impediments for small seller firms. Further, high taxes and duties on imported products increase costs. Income tax is being charged at the rates of 1%, 2% and 5.5% besides sales tax at the rate of 18% on importation of goods at import stage. Further, provincial sales tax at the rates of 16% and 13% is imposed on e-commerce by Punjab and Sindh, while sales tax is collected by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan at the rate of 15%. As far as procedure is concerned, the taxpayers are obliged to file monthly sales tax returns under the law at the federal level on supply of goods and at the provincial level for sale of services. The procedures for filing sales tax returns appear complex; hence, they need to be simplified and devise a single return mechanism for the declaration of supply of goods and services. ■

The writer studied Taxation Policy & Management at Keio University, Japan, and is serving as Additional Commissioner (Inland Revenue), Corporate Tax Office, Lahore.



Population Management

NOW OR NEVER

The size of the population is considered an integral element of national power. The US and China, being hugely populous countries, have invested liberally in the development of human capital and have transformed their economies into knowledge-based economies aligned with the challenges of the 21st century. The populations of these nations have proved to be a demographic dividend, ushering in an era of exemplary socio-economic development. But population is a ticking time bomb for Pakistan, being the fifth most populous country with a growth rate of 2.5 percent per annum and abysmal human development indicators. It is worthwhile to mention here that Pakistan is an outlier in South Asia, as the average population growth rate in the region is one percent. Pakistan is facing the hydra of overpopulation as a non-conventional security threat to its viability. The history of population policy in Pakistan is largely the story of criminal negligence and



Jalal Khan missed opportunities. The reign of Ayub Khan can be credited for formulating a socially progressive policy and emphasizing population planning, i.e. increasing the marriage age for females. The Bhutto era also focused on family planning, but the Zia era of virtual theocracy declared family planning in conflict with Islam. The era of interlude democracy of the 1990s was marred by political instability and no notable attention was paid to this pressing issue. In the last decade of Pakistan's history, despite the consecutive three civilian governments, population planning trends have remained stagnant. The most recent policy response to population control occurred when the Chief Justice of Pakistan took suo motu notice of the alarmingly high growth rate reflected in the 2017 census. It resulted in the creation of a task force tasked with crafting pathways to reduce the population, but the lack of implementation has been the missing link in the policymaking of our country. The pressing issue of population explosion in Pakistan is the interplay of multifaceted

factors:

There is lack of political will to craft a well-thought-out and consistent policy for family planning and implement it so

as to curb the exponential increase in population growth.

One of the primary reasons for weak population policymaking is the rigid interpretation of Islam and conservative mindset about the ambiguity regarding the permissibility of family planning in Islam. It is pertinent to mention here that clergy in Bangladesh and Iran have issued fatwas (religious edicts) in support of family planning, but in Pakistan, the case is otherwise. Family planning is considered a social taboo that is a

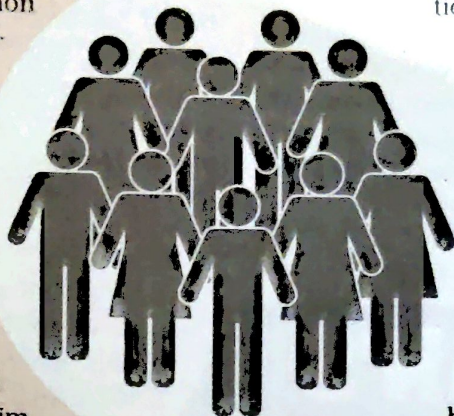
product of illiteracy, especially in females having an overall literacy rate of 48 percent. Conservative social mores often deprive couples of taking independent decisions

about their reproductive health and family affairs.

Pakistan is a rapidly growing country with a youth bulge - 65% of its population is under the age of 30. The growing population of youth is posing an existential threat to the country due to very low

investment, i.e. less than 2 percent of GDP, on education. It is posing a national security threat due to abysmal human development indicators; youth are becoming tools in the hands of extremist elements due to frustration and lack of employment opportunities. Brain drain is also the product of missing opportunities for the young to be absorbed in the job market of the country. Most of the youth have developed a perception that Pakistan is an intellectual wasteland.

There is a dire need for the stakeholders in the power corridors to realize the gravity of the matter and learn lessons from regional Muslim countries like Bangladesh and Iran. It is reiterated that women's empowerment and population control are the cardinal features for the development model of Bangladesh. However, it may be deliberated that development with political freedom may not ensure political stability and sustained economic growth. The fall of the Hasina Wajid government and the strikes, and protests against the growing state repression in Iran are pertinent examples.



A recent report issued by the Planning Commission paints a very grim picture about the structural faultiness in Pakistan's education system and lack of preparedness for the future challenges of Pakistan. The District Education Performance Index report reveals that the education system is in an overall low performance category, mainly due to poor-quality teaching/low learning outcomes and insufficient public financing. The burgeoning population is casting dark clouds on the economy of the country. Population management is the need of the hour; without a functioning and efficient education system, the aim of a productive workforce will remain a distant dream.

This is high time to address the issue of a burgeoning population through a three-pronged strategy: - To take up the issue at the political level, a well-thought-out population policy may be drafted and all stakeholders, especially the ulema, may be taken on board for its formulation and subsequent implementation. A robust policy framework with an actionable plan, based on the Iran and Bangladesh models, will be a step in the right direction.

To ensure quality education that may prepare enlightened human beings, especially women, in order to equip them with independent decision-making about

their reproductive rights, economic independence and empowerment.

To initiate incremental reforms in religious education in order to align it with globalization trends, and to make a progressive lot that fosters tolerance, moderation and the establishment of a constructive society based on the true teachings of Islam. Islam is a dynamic religion, and its teachings are valid for contemporary times. There is a need for the rational interpretation of Islam to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Pakistan is confronting grave challenges in terms of vitalizing its human capital and transforming its liability of overpopulation into a national asset. In a nutshell, Pakistan can convert this impending demographic disaster into a demographic dividend through sustained political will, a consistent population and development policy, structural reforms in modern and religious education, community outreach and women's empowerment. ■

The writer is a civil servant based in Islamabad.

Why Population Control is Crucial

Population control is not a panacea for all of Pakistan's economic problems, but it is a critical component of a comprehensive strategy for sustainable development. By implementing effective population control measures, Pakistan can alleviate resource scarcity, reduce infrastructure burdens, create more jobs, and improve access to education and healthcare.

Resource Scarcity: A burgeoning population places immense strain on limited resources such as land, water, and energy. This scarcity can hinder economic development and lead to social unrest.

Infrastructure Burden: Rapid population growth necessitates substantial investments in infrastructure, including housing, education, and healthcare. These investments can be overwhelming for developing economies like Pakistan.

Job Creation: A growing population requires a corresponding increase in job opportunities. If not met, unemployment rates can soar, leading to social instability and economic decline.

Education and Healthcare: A large population can strain educational and healthcare systems, leading to inadequate access to essential services, particularly for the most vulnerable segments of society.

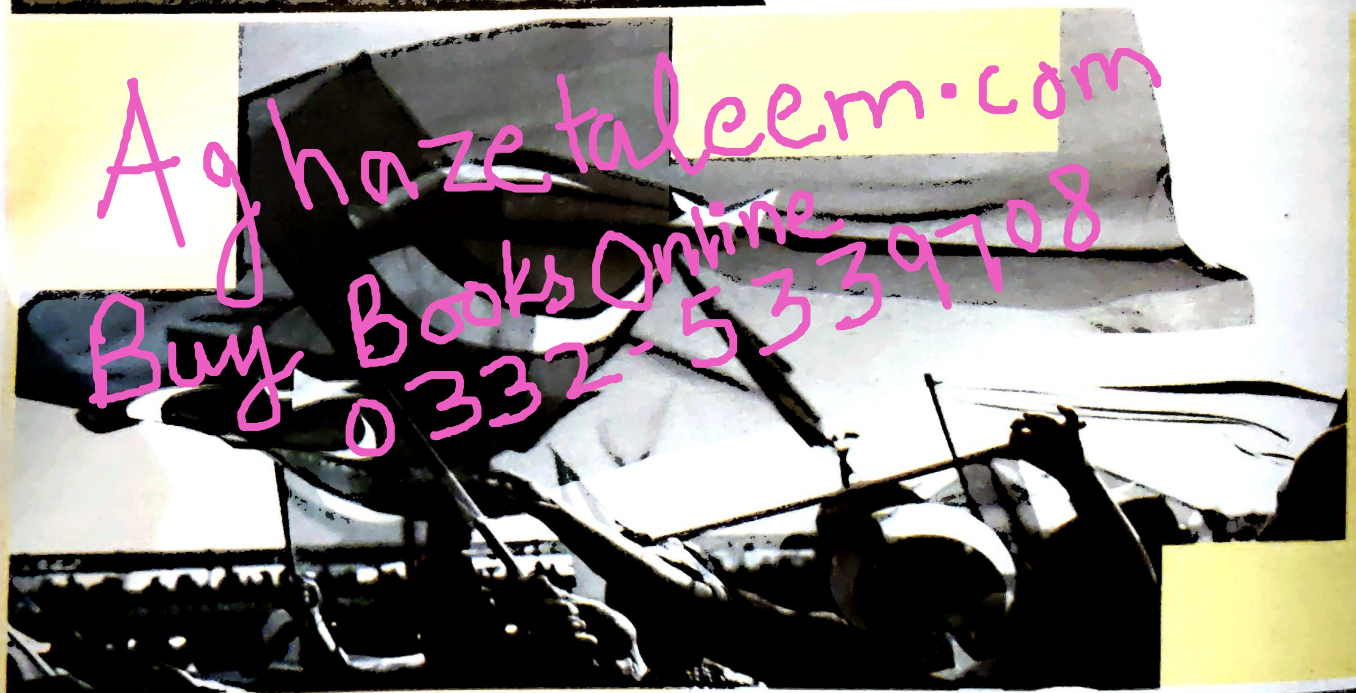
Hamza Rashid Khan Marwat

The "Great Game" or "Tournament of Shadows" shackled Central Asia and entangled the region in such an imbroglio from which it still suffers. Ironically, it was Arthur Connolly who first coined the legendary phrase, although it was Kipling who immortalized it many years later in his novel Kim. At the end, the ultimate prize of this great shadowy battle was British India, the golden bird. To this day, this battle continues to claim the lives of many innocent civilians while serving the interests of powerful players. In the ongoing New Great Game, Pakistan, once a pawn, holds powerful position on the vast chessboard.

deserts and mountain ranges of Central Asia, to Chinese Turkestan and Tibet in the east. The region is important because of its position at the heart of Eurasia. Most importantly, the Central Asian region is full of resources like oil, gas and minerals like gold, zinc, silver, lead and iron ore and crucial oil-pipeline routes. To pursue their interests in the region, the major powers, including Pakistan and India, are playing their part, as the collapse of the Russian rule in the region tossed the area back into the melting pot of history.

In the arena of history, the Great Game started in the early 19th century when Catherine the Great started her move toward Caucasus and thrust into the Persian sphere of influence. Later, Tsar Paul, in 1801, dispatched a full invading force toward this

PAKISTAN'S



With its strategic location, deep historical ties and evolving alliances,

Pakistan finds itself at the heart of the modern struggle for regional dominance, and is navigating complex relationships with neighbouring countries like Afghanistan and Iran, as well as those with major powers like China, Russia and the United States. Pakistan must learn lessons from the old game to avoid old mistakes and fully take advantage of current scenarios.

The vast chessboard on which this shadowy struggle for political ascendancy takes place stretches from the snow-capped Caucasus in the west, across the great

STRATEGIC ASCENT

From Pawn to Power in the New Great Game

direction, but it was called back upon his death shortly afterward. Later, Tsar Alexander planned to join forces with Napoleon to march toward India and conquer it, but this alliance didn't last long as the French entered the burning Moscow. The French also planned to befriend Persia to use it as a route, but the British succeeded in removing the threat by threatening, Shah and, at the same time, presenting gifts and good deals to him.

By the mid-19th century, Central Asia was almost



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NATIONAL

conquered by Russians. All the ancient Silk Road cities were in Tsar's hand. The great walled city of Tashkent fell and after that, Samarkand, Khivan and Bokhara also. The Russian General Skobelev used to say, "I hold it as a principle that the harder you hit them, the longer they remain quiet." His principle surely worked and tamed the vicious Turcoman warrior tribes.

On the northern borders in Xinxiang in 1865, a man named Yakub Bey of Khokand came to lead the revolt in Kashghar. He became king of Kashghar and invaded Yarkand too. Kashghar, in 1877, was invaded again by the emperor and soon he forced Russians to leave Ili. The Russians also had a treaty with the Chinese, established after the Second Opium War, which allowed them to establish consulates throughout China. This agreement gave Russians an upper hand in

1942) broke out. The war ended very badly due to the resistance of local tribes and a massacre at Gandamak. Soon the second Anglo-Afghan war started, which proved to be a success for the British, led by General Roberts. At the end, the Treaty of Gandamak was signed, in which Afghan foreign policy was surrendered to the British. Joint Afghan Border Commission seated on Oct. 1884 in Sarakhs to create a permanent border between Russia and Afghanistan. Pandjeh was a part of Afghanistan, but Russians occupied the territory and Afghans lost this region. They do not lay a claim to the region anymore. After some years, the Durand Line was established to create a permanent border between Afghanistan and British India.

The third Anglo-Afghan War began in 1919 after the assassination of Habibullah Khan, when Amanullah Khan ascended to the position of Emir. He initiated the conflict along the Durand Line to reclaim Afghanistan's autonomy in foreign policy. The war concluded with the Treaty of Rawalpindi, in which the British recognized the Afghan government and granted Afghanistan full control over its foreign policy. Moreover, August 19 was designated as Independence Day for Afghanistan. Soon Amanullah Khan was overthrown by Habibullah Kalakani and exiled to British India.

The Great Game officially ended with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 and other factors such as the Russo-Japanese War and the third Anglo-Afghan War. But this was not to last long. The Russian Revolution ended all the treaties and war started again. In 1979, the Russians invaded Afghanistan to support their puppet government but faced serious resistance and, thus, had to flee. The disintegration

of the Soviet Union in 1991 resulted in the creation of eight countries. The withdrawal created a power vacuum in the region, which invited many players to play the new Great Game.

The 9/11 attacks, allegedly carried out by al-Qaeda without the permission of the Taliban government, resulted in the American invasion of Afghanistan. Americans started many projects in the region to strengthen their hold. They introduced the New Silk Road initiative to link Central Asia and Afghanistan to sea through Pakistan. This project was not as successful as China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Americans, through these projects, are trying to promote their values in Central Asia so as to decrease the Chinese and Russian influence. Yet the China-Russia alliance



the region against British influence.

The British, to protect themselves from any Russian invasion, started strengthening their control on border regions such as Hunza, Dardistan, NWFP, the Pashtun tribal region and Baluchistan. They dispatched researchers and agents in these regions so that they could get the details that would help them later invade them.

Later, the Afghan emir, who became king after the civil war and defeat of Durrani, had good relations with the British and wanted their help to retake Peshawar province from Ranjit Singh. But the British were not ready to help him because of good relations with the Sikh ruler. Emir Dost Mohammad tried to lean toward Russians to acquire these old lands. This threatened the British, and the first Anglo-Afghan war (1938-

in the region is way more powerful. Moscow views the post Soviet space in the region as its sphere of influence, crucial to its aspiration of regional hegemony. Russia seeks to assert its dominance over these states to shape regional policies, limit external influence and bolster its status as a great power. To this end, Russia employs various strategies, including leveraging institutions like the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), as part of a broader approach of 'cooperative hegemony'. Russia does not tolerate the United States in the region, especially given the strained relations between the two countries following the annexation of Crimea, allegations of interference in US presidential elections, cyberattacks and the invasion of Ukraine. On the other hand, the Chinese BRI consists of two main components: the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB). Pakistan serves as a key gateway to the sea for Central Asia and Afghanistan, enhancing its strategic significance in the region. China's relations with Central Asian States have been growing, and the BRI's ambitions extend beyond Eurasia, with broader global plans. Additionally, China is actively involved in the Central Asian energy sector, further solidifying its influence and economic footprint in the region. Meanwhile, when it comes to economic cooperation in the region, China is in the best position to capitalize in Central Asian states, and even in Afghanistan. In the current scenario, Pakistan is extremely important in the region as it is the only connection to the sea — whether it's the US's NSR or China's BRI, Pakistan is the only route toward the sea. Afghanistan will be connected with the sea through CPEC, which will lead to the future stability of Afghanistan. Trade will boom in the region, and Pakistan will play a crucial role in all this process. Pakistan should use its position carefully to adjust relations with China and the USA. Power projects such as TAPI pipelines pass through Pakistan and connect Central Asia to South Asia. Secondly, all the players are seriously concerned about the extremism and radicalism that is nurturing in Afghanistan. There are serious threats of 9/11-like attacks from Afghanistan. Terrorist organizations are



located in Afghanistan and the Afghan government does not have enough resources to curtail such threats. China is concerned about East Turkestan Islamic Movements of Xinxiang, and Russia and the USA are concerned about Islamic State (Daesh) and Uzbekistan Islamic Movement. Pakistan, as a hero of war on terror and having influence in Afghanistan, is the only cure to the curse of extremism. Pakistan should take full advantage of this "knight" position on the Great Game chessboard. Pakistan has Pashtun population four times greater than that of Afghanistan; it just needs to use this demographic dominance for stability. The only solution to Afghan problem is creating a government with tribal consent as learned from three Anglo-Afghan wars as well as Russian and American invasions. In a nutshell, the Great Game has evolved into a new globalized Great Game that encompasses a wide range of conflicts and extends across the entire world. Pakistan is a link between the world and Central Asian countries. Pakistan, once a pawn in the great game, now holds powerful positions in the new globalized great game. Now, in this complex geopolitical landscape, Pakistan must leverage all these dynamics to secure its economic stability, military strength and diplomatic influence in the region. The path to Central Asia's future runs through Islamabad, and Pakistan's active participation in this evolving game is not just an option; it is a necessity for its rise in regional and global affairs. ■

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Social media and other online spaces play an undeniable role in promoting radicalization and violent extremism. Online spaces are considered a major cause of radicalization and adoption of extremist ideologies that revolve around grievances and injustices at different levels—ranging from individual to state to international level—and the use of violence to help change the situation. It is also a fact that social media can be used to prevent violent extremism in multiple ways, such as to propagate the message of unity instead of division, peace instead of violence, compassion instead of hatred and cooperation instead of conflict, etc. Social media, thus, can be used both ways: it facilitates the spread of terrorism and violent extremism, but it can also be used to prevent such violence. This article is about the use of social media in preventing violent extremism.



Modernity has culminated in a globalized world—it is more connected and interdependent now than it was any time in history. The internet has played a key role in bringing people closer. Everyone has now

easy access to online platforms, especially social media, and can get connected with whomsoever they want to. Mobile phone has

become a key component of human life, as life without it seems incomplete. Mobiles and social media have become the necessary conditions for life in the modern world. Modernity has made the traditional understanding of time and space redundant, and people now live in distanciation—time and space separation—to use Anthony Giddens's phrase. People are now "disembedded": they have been "lifted out" of their local contexts and restructured into a vast span of time and space. So, the internet has transformed the world into a global village.

However, there is another dimension to the use of the internet and social media: spreading violent extremism. It is almost evenly spread across the globe, i.e. from botched Islamism to Hindutva to the far-right White Christian supremacists in the West. It is a bitter truth that violent extremism has reached a gargantuan proportion in South Asia—especially in India and Pakistan. Violent extremism in Pakistan is about the top-down imposition of the puritanical version of Islam, and in India, it has taken shape of Hindutva ideology, promoted by the fascist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This marks a significant deviation from the path envisioned by the founding founders of

both states: They wanted to create secular, democratic states for their respective peoples.

Violent extremist ideologies took a new, dangerous turn with the advent of the internet. That is where the role of social media in spreading violent ideologies

comes in. Social media plays a double role: it creates a chasm and escalates

communal tension and violence, as extremists use

it as a tool to further their agenda, on the one hand; it can

prevent violent extremism by

disseminating messages of unity, peace,

tolerance and positive narratives, on the other.

Moreover, effective communication can

play a crucial role in preventing violent extremism. This includes reinforcing

positive community behaviour and responsibilities, encouraging inclusivity,

avoiding the use of extremist rhetoric and focussing on common values and purposes instead.

Social media is a powerful tool to prevent the spread of violent extremism, but it is essential for the state authorities to monitor it in a way that does not infringe on freedom of expression. This monitoring should follow protocols aimed at breaking the chain of violent extremism and fostering peace, cooperation, tolerance and harmony in society. Providing quality education, addressing the needs of the 26 million out-of-school children and reducing gender disparity are crucial steps. Additionally, families play an essential



role in preventing violent extremism by influencing behavioural changes, shaping children's perceptions, ideologies and social relationships. In this age of social media, where propaganda machines and global networks of terrorist organizations and extremist groups are omnipresent, it is crucial to recognize the challenges we face, particularly in Pakistan. The country has been entangled in terrorism and violent extremism for decades, which has badly affected the fabric of society, leaving little room for peace and stability. In the light of these challenges, it is essential to adopt a diagnostic approach to social media for the purpose of preventing violent extremism. Although everyone uses social media, few people deliberately analyze the nature of the content being shared across different platforms. Some extremist groups have created online communities to promote their own radical and bigoted agendas, achieving their goals through fear, intimidation and force.

According to the latest digital report, there are 71.70 million social media users in Pakistan, making up 29.5 percent of the population. This includes both educated and uneducated individuals, as well as professionals, yet very few critically evaluate the content shared on social media or the sources of the information and knowledge they consume. However, the productive use of social media can deter the spread of violent extremism while fostering peace, tolerance, harmony and cooperation among people in society. While citizens should have the freedom of speech and expression, they need not only to be well-equipped to analyze what they see on social media but can also differentiate between narrow, discriminatory views and balanced, objective ones.

Moreover, promoting education at the grassroots level is a remedy for the problems associated with violent extremism. Education is one of the most effective ways to make people aware and bring about societal change. Providing quality education to children with a curriculum that meets the demands of the 21st century encourages critical thinking, curiosity and rational thought rather than fostering discriminatory or bigoted views about the ideology and belief systems of other nations and communities. The state should

address the needs of out-of-school children by providing them with quality education, helping them become good citizens and instilling a sense of humanity, tolerance and service to the nation. In addition, teachers should educate students about the responsible use of social media to prevent violent extremist tendencies. It is also essential for

teachers to provide psychological support from the beginning, focussing on socialization, personality development and emotional support. Moreover, these goals cannot be achieved without changes in the curriculum. Educators should teach curricula that encourage students to challenge ideas, think critically and engage in meaningful debates. This approach will not only help prevent violent extremism but also contribute to building a strong and resilient nation.

Furthermore, it is a prerequisite for both the state and its institutions to monitor all social media apps, ensuring positive checks on the content available to the public, mapping opinions and influencing behaviours. In this age of social media, extremist organizations and terrorist networks are using these platforms to achieve their nefarious objectives. So, a proactive response from the state and its institutions is imperative to control and prevent the spread of violent extremism.

The National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) should play a crucial role in counterextremism and counterterrorism efforts. The state should strengthen and empower NACTA's role in coordinating and formulating policies to counter extremist narratives through social media, education and other sophisticated strategies. Moreover, it is the primary responsibility of the

state and its corresponding institutions to promote awareness campaigns through social media apps across the country. Educational institutions should also be instructed to conduct seminars and research studies on the prevention of violent extremism through social media. Parliamentarians, policymakers and think tanks will coordinate counterterrorism efforts and conduct studies to identify the root causes and patterns of violent extremism and terrorism. Close relationships and communication between



parents and children are crucial for countering violent extremism in society, as parents play a vital role in shaping young people's attitudes and responses to social pressures.

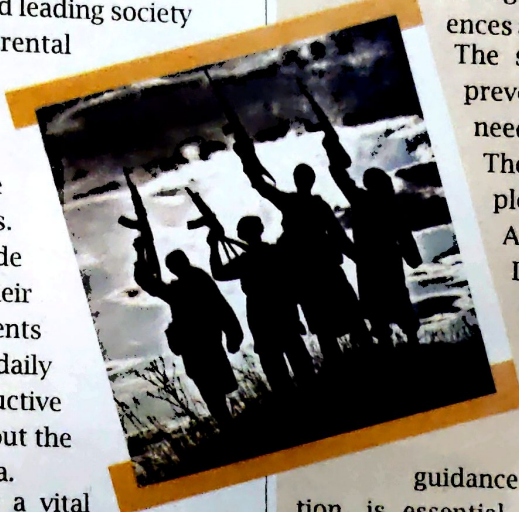
In today's age of social media, young people are more prone to violent extremism and vulnerable to radicalization, particularly when they face social exclusion, poor communication with parents, identity crises, unemployment, discrimination and overexposure to biased content on social media. Parents are often the first to detect signs of extremism in their children's behaviours, attitudes, emotional responses and social networks. Therefore, they must respond promptly to help their children avoid the trap of extremism and bridge the gaps that might lead them toward extremist narratives and discourses. The state response to preventing violent extremism is important, but it is not enough on its own; the contribution of the entire society is paramount in fighting violent extremism, promoting tolerance and peace and leading society toward a brighter future. Parental

capacity-building is essential, and families should strengthen emotional ties with their children, ensuring they do not experience social exclusion or identity crisis. Instead, parents should provide nurturing guidance and steer their children in the right direction. Parents must monitor their children's daily activities, engage them in productive endeavours and educate them about the use and importance of social media. Religious communities also play a vital role in the prevention of violent extremism.

Prim

arily, this responsibility lies with religious communities; they should provide the correct interpretation of Islam and Shariah as guided by the commands of Allah Almighty and the Holy Prophet (PBUH), and share their views on social media to counter preaching that distorts perceptions and leads people toward violent extremism. Pakistan can learn from the examples of other states on countering violent extremism. For instance, preventing violent extremism is one of Finland's top priorities, which is why this country is ranked highly in indices of peace, happiness and safety. They have planned to strengthen the knowledge of imams and community leaders so they can support their communities with accurate information. Finnish authorities have recognized that their religious leaders can be effective in countering militant ideology shared on social media. This approach has led their society

towards peace, tolerance and cooperation, effectively eradicating the spread of violent extremism. Similarly, if the Pakistani state plans and coordinates with religious communities to share a uniform interpretation of Shariah guided by the Holy Quran and counter extremist narratives and ideologies, it could rid the country of radicalism, terrorism and violent extremism. So, a responsible use of social media—along with keeping a watchful eye on its content—and educating people to differentiate between balanced and extremist views will help eradicate the scourge of violent extremism from society. Quality education is the key to promoting tolerance, peace, cooperation and preventing violent extremism, making people more civilized and socialized. Changes in the curriculum should encourage students to think critically, engage in rational thought, be open to debate and discussion and avoid incorporating elements of discrimination and bigotry based on ideological differences and belief systems.

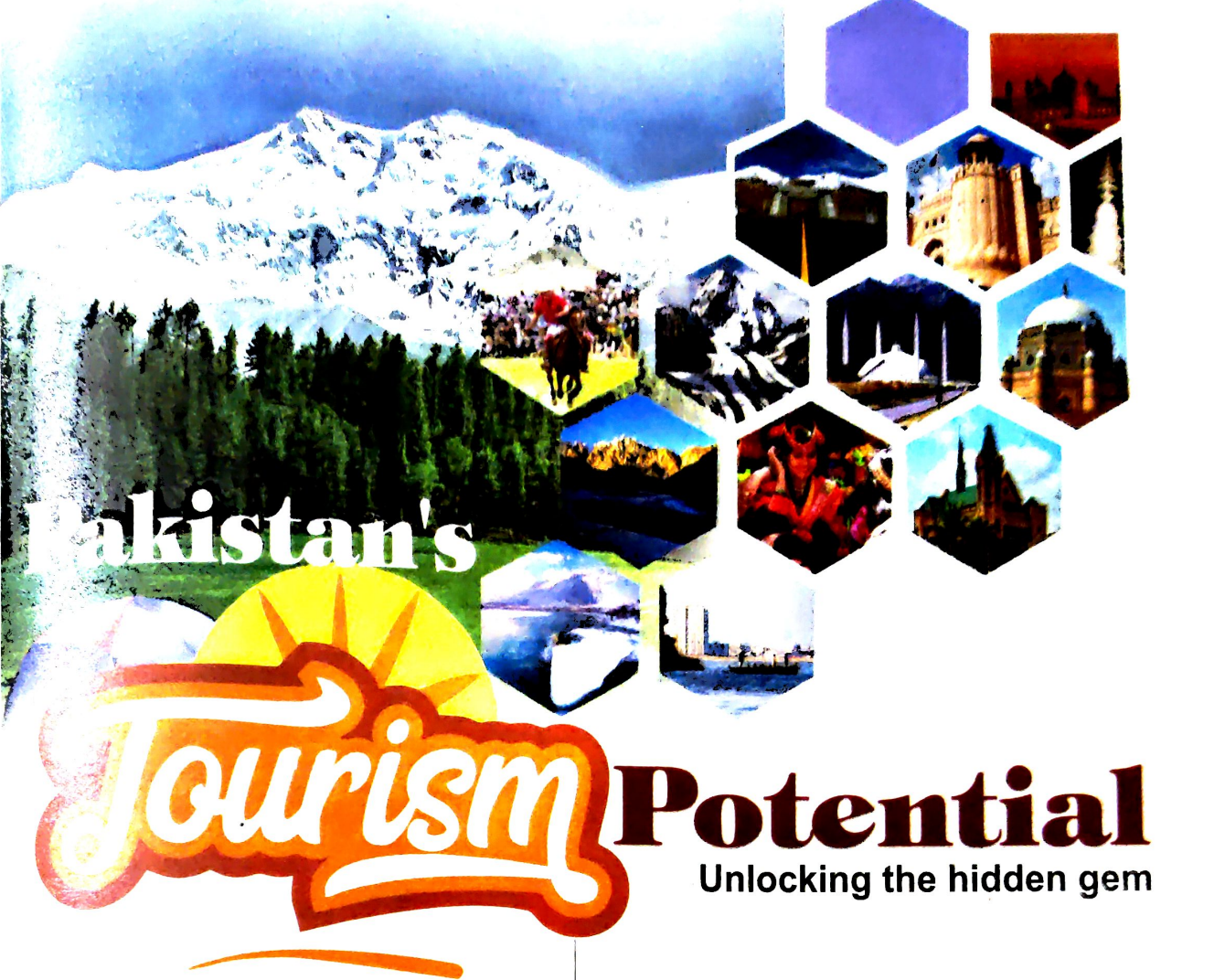


The state can watch social media to prevent violent extremism, and it also needs to encourage debate in society.

The people should follow the principles of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah—'Faith, Unity and Discipline'—to lead the country towards the ideal envisioned by the founder of Pakistan. Most importantly, increased communication between parents and children, along with parental

guidance, emotional support and socialization, is essential. Parents should focus on their children's careers, social networks and educate them about the responsible use of social media. The government and institutions should launch awareness campaigns in both urban and rural areas to inform people about the importance of the positive use of social media and the prevention of violent extremism. Furthermore, the role of religious communities is equally important in contributing to the prevention of violent extremism by sharing balanced views on social media, countering militant ideologies and groups, and dismantling extremist and terrorist organizations. This approach will lead to the prevention of violent extremism and foster a peaceful, cooperative and progressive society. ■

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According to the World Tourism Organization of the United Nations, Pakistan was named the best-performing destination for tourism during the first nine months of 2023. This was a significant achievement for Pakistan, as it has been toiling to boost its tourism industry in recent years. This industry, which has an immense potential to attract travellers from across the world, has been growing steadily. Besides its geography as a valuable asset, Pakistan is bestowed with a spectacular landscape and rich cultural heritage, complemented by its peace-loving people and warm hospitality. The recognition by the World Tourism Organization is a testament to Pakistan's tourism potential. Tourism, according to the World Tourism Organization, is

Faridullah
a phenomenon in which people travel, temporary and short-term, to and stay in places outside their usual environment and residence for personal and business purposes. A tourist is a person who visits a place for pleasure and interests, usually while on free days. To make it more concise, tourism is an act of spending time outside the places where one normally lives and works in pursuit of recreation, relaxation and pleasure for not less than 24 hours and not more than one year.


Triggered by curiosity, a fundamental aspect of human nature, it is a process of exploring new places and experiences. Regarding its destination, tourism can occur domestically, where people travel within a country to visit another town or city, or internationally, where people travel to visit another country. Tourism serves different



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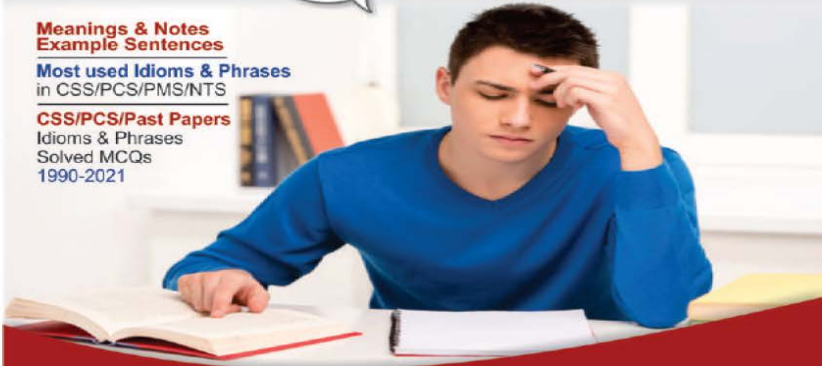
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purposes, including sports, religion, education, entertainment, business, pleasure, etc. Indeed, tourism is a complex set of industries that include accommodation, recreation and entertainment, food and beverage services and transportation for business, leisure or other purposes. Today, tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries. According to the World Tourism Organization, it employs about 10% of the world's total workforce. Being a promising realm, it confers a multitude of benefits. First, it brings socio-economic dividends for a country. It creates job opportunities and ensures considerable income generation, which, in turn, boosts the country's economy in the form of foreign exchange earnings. It improves the quality of life for local communities and promotes community pride. It also supports human rights and gender equality. Second, a country has to develop proper infrastructure to facilitate tourists regarding accommodation, transportation, entertainment, pleasure, etc. Thus, tourism has a vital role in a country's infrastructure development, which is crucial for economic growth, competitiveness and quality of life. Third, tourism exposes a country to the world's experience. People all over the world visit the country and share their experiences with others. This puts the country into the limelight and helps build an impressive national image and reputation. Fourth, eco-tourism promotes environmental sustainability and helps to conserve cultural assets and traditions. This plays a vital role in environmental conservation, which is more crucial now than ever before. Last but by no means least, tourism promotes peace and stability and helps foster global understanding and cooperation. Thus, looking at the immense dividends tourism brings to a country, every nation of the world endeavours to attract as many tourists as it can. Many countries, faced with financial hardships, are investing heavily in the tourism industry to contribute to their GDP and create employment. For Pakistan too, this sector offers great benefits. For quite some years,



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its economy has been in the doldrums, which needs a powerful boost to stay afloat. Moreover, some malign agents are lurking to tarnish this country's image. Therefore, for Pakistan, it is imperative to unleash the venues for tourism to boost its GDP and improve the country's image worldwide. There is no denying that there are few countries that can match the tourism potential that nature has bestowed upon this land of the pure. Let's discuss the potential venues for tourism in Pakistan.

To begin with, the high and mighty mountains in the north make Pakistan an enviable entity for many countries. Pakistan's north is the meeting point of the majestic Himalayas, the Karakoram and the Hindu Kush. It is home to the world's second-highest peak, the K2. Five of the 14 peaks above 8,000

meters are situated in Pakistan. The world's highest ATM also resides in the snow-capped mountains in the Khunjerab Pass of Pakistan. The Siachen Glacier, the longest glacier in Karakoram and second-highest in the world's non-polar regions, which is also the highest battleground on earth, is located in Pakistan. In fact, with 7,253 known glaciers, Pakistan has more glaciers than almost anywhere on Earth outside the Polar Regions. All this, along with the captivating landscape decorated by gorgeous ridges, fabled lakes, high-altitude meadows and scenic passes, allures tourists from all over the world. People and adventurers all over the world visit these areas for mountaineering, camping, skiing, etc.

Secondly, Pakistan, whose inhabitants believe in religious freedom and harmony, is a bastion of major religions. It harbours the religious and sacred sites of different religions and invites devotees to visit their respective religious sites. Pakistan has rich Buddhist heritage sites, particularly in the Gandhara region of Mardan, Takht-i-Bahi, Taxila and Swat. These sites, along with the Diplomatic Enclave Temple, the only functional Buddhist temple in Pakistan, which is used by Buddhist diplomats in Islamabad, attract Buddhist followers from across the world. Pakistan also has

considerable holy sites of the Sikh religion. The Nankana Sahib, Kartarpur Sahib and Punja Sahib attract Sikh yatrees in thousands annually. Sikhs from Indian Punjab have a great religious affinity for these Gurdwaras. Finally, the Sufi shrines of various Sufi saints - notable shrines of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, Bahauddin Zakariya, Sachal Sarmast, Baba Bulleh Shah, Baba Farid Ganj Shakar and Data Darbar - attract spiritual pilgrims from the Muslim world.

Thirdly, Pakistani territory harbours many historical, archaeological and cultural heritage sites. Archaeological sites at Moenjodaro, the Buddhist ruins of Takht-i-Bahi, the Fort and Shalamar Garden in Lahore, the Rohtas Fort built by Sher Shah Suri, historical monuments at Makli, Thatta and the ancient city of Taxila are places in Pakistan that have been named UNESCO World Heritage sites. Additionally, Wazir Khan Mosque, Minar-e-Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Mausoleum, Khyber Pass, Derawar Fort, etc. also enrich the cultural and historical assets of Pakistan. Along with this, Pakistan has a great Mughal heritage in art, literature and architecture. Such places attract cultural and archaeological tourists from around the world.

Fourthly, nature has bestowed Pakistan with incredible biodiversity, along with a wide range of ecosystems, which offers great opportunities for eco-tourism. From the riverine forest in the east to the sandy deserts in Sindh and Punjab to the Indus River delta to the mountainous ranges in the north, the varied topography and climate have fostered remarkable wildlife and natural habitats in Pakistan. Visitors enjoy the varied local flora and fauna, which creates a soothing effect on the mind. In this regard, biodiversity tourism offers safaris, trout fishing, bird watching, hunting, etc. Additionally, different game species make Pakistan a destination for trophy hunters. In the past, dignitaries from Arab countries have come to Pakistan to hunt

various animals like the Houbara Bustard - now an endangered species in Pakistan. Though endangered and its national animal, the hunting of Markhor in Pakistan is recognized by international hunting organizations, making it a sought-after experience for hunters worldwide.

Lastly, the coastal areas of Pakistan offer fascinating spots for tourists. It has a long coastline with beautiful beaches, islands and coastal towns that offer a diverse range of tourism opportunities. Clifton Beach (Karachi), Paradise Point (Karachi), Manora Island (Karachi), Gadani Beach (Balochistan), Ormara Beach (Balochistan), and Astola Island (Balochistan) are but a few of the coastal beaches that offer a range of activities like beach relaxation,

swimming, surfing, diving, island hopping, marine life exploration, etc. Thus, it is crystal clear from the above discourse that Pakistan has enough tourism potential, which can boost the country's sagging economy and uplift its international image. As Stephen Cohen states, "While history has been unkind with Pakistan, its geography has been its greatest benefit." To put this quote in perspective, the geography of Pakistan is a treasure trove of tourism opportunities, along with offering other benefits.

From the majestic Himalayas to the vast swathes of the Indus plains to the serene Arabian Sea, its diverse landscape and natural wonders attract travellers from around the world. These spectacular landscapes are complemented by the rich culture and warm hospitality of Pakistani people, which is renowned worldwide. Therefore, now is the time to showcase Pakistan's tourism potential to the world and attract travellers to explore its hidden gems! ■

The writer is currently serving as an educator in the KP government. He can be reached at: faridullah165@gmail.com



Zahid Karim

Indubitably, brain drain has become a serious concern in Pakistan. Many highly educated and skilled workers are leaving the country for better opportunities abroad. Sadly, people are unable to find better jobs, healthcare facilities, sound education and, above all, protection of life, property and liberty. In fact, lawlessness and economic turmoil have ruined the lives of people. This hydra has been swallowing the talent, abilities and capabilities of human beings. It has rendered many unable to prove themselves worthy of human development in any dimension of life. This phenomenon has turned assets into liabilities. Keeping in view the atrocities done upon human beings by the ruthless political, economic, social and administrative system of the country, many natives have been compelled to leave the country with heavy hearts.

The current situation of brain drain in Pakistan is exceedingly depressing. It is evident from the fact that approximately 832,339 Pakistanis left the country for better employment in 2022. According to the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE), it is the highest number since 2016 and the third-highest ever recorded. In 2023, the country experienced a 119% rise in the emigration of highly skilled individuals and professionals. This phenomenon has made Pakistan the second-largest country in South Asia with high emigration rates. Another eye-opening study has revealed that almost 50,000 Pakistanis apply for passports daily. Remorsefully, the youth of Pakistan are being forced to leave the country. They are even unable to make both ends meet. The irony of the fate is that the ruling elite of this country is not ready to pay heed to their basic needs, choices and preferences. They neither care nor take any serious steps to alleviate their wounds. Despite the gravity of the issue, political classes remain at loggerheads with each other. They are not sincere to anybody. They only try to secure their own interests. They want their own style of governance. They have never made policies favourable to the masses. It causes a sense of insecurity and instability. Changes in government setup have become the norm of the day. In turn, the lack of long-term policies and planning has given rise to an environment of corruption, bad governance and ineptness. This phenomenon discourages investment in education and research, leading to fewer opportunities for skilled professionals. Thus, political instability adversely affects the socioeconomic, politico-

religious, academic and productive environment. Apparently, the majority of the people leave the country in compulsion rather than pleasure due to the volatile situation of Pakistan's economy. It is also evident from a report by the World Bank, which categorically states that the economic sector has been in a shambles for the last couple of years. The foreign reserves of the country have sunk below \$3.7 billion. Its currency has devalued to around PKR 270 a dollar.



Brain Drain VS

The inflation rate rose up to 26%. A spiralling hike in the energy prices has further worsened the situation. All these factors lead to socio-economic difficulties while pushing the people to leave their motherland. It can safely be commented that professionals often leave the country to seek better economic prospects and financial stability.

Moreover, social sufferings are another reason behind this turmoil. In fact, financial stress accompanied by the political landscape has badly damaged the social fabric of the country. Social unrest causes instability among the low-to-middle-income nations. It eventually leads to the flight of academicians, healthcare professionals and skilled workers. Besides, it also results in poor law and order situation, bad governance and social violence in Pakistan. A volatile environment and sense of uncertainty have also been created due to ethnic, sectarian and political tensions. This drives the educated and skilled workforce to seek refuge in more peaceful and stable countries. Resultantly, it becomes the main reason to push the individuals to migrate to politically and socially stable

and strong countries.

Additionally, limited access to quality healthcare, education and social justice creates dissatisfaction and discomfort among the masses. Pakistan is beset with poor public health infrastructure, widespread diseases and limited access to quality care. It has pushed families to emigrate in search of healthier living conditions.

Moreover, the education system of Pakistan is flawed. It has been suffering from outdated curricula, poorly

abilities. It impedes technological advancement and innovation. In addition, the mass exodus of researchers, scientists and academics hampers research and development. It has led the country into the quagmire of poor quality of services offered in these vital areas. This hampers the ability of the state to address its domestic challenges effectively. It undermines its long-term development objectives. Hence, competitiveness and the possibility of scientific advancements in Pakistan are at stake across the globe.

Indeed, out of gloom, there always comes a gleam of hope. In order to deal with the menacing brain drain in Pakistan, there should be sagacious strategies to deal with economic pessimism that is rooted in political instability. Factors that are prerequisite to eliminate political stability in Pakistan include transparent governance, stringent anti-corruption measures, stable electoral processes, empowered democratic institutions, national unity and economic reforms. Strengthening law enforcement and encouraging civil society engagement also play crucial roles in creating a stable political environment. That is conducive to sustainable development and citizen well-being. Moreover, by promoting national identity and collaborating with the diasporas, countries strive to create an environment that not only retains talent but also attracts skilled individuals back, ultimately mitigating the adverse effects of brain drain.

The crux of the matter is that Pakistan has failed to handle this issue with the urgency it deserves. The country is losing bright individuals at an alarming rate—nearly 10 million in the last 20 years. It has not only weakened economic growth and innovation, but also adversely impacted the healthcare system and information technology. The loss of young talent and professionals diminishes the development of the country. If it is not stopped on a war footing basis and plans are not devised to deal with the loss, the nation might suffer severe consequences. In short, it requires urgent and comprehensive reforms like betterment of economic conditions, corroboration of political stability and creation of conducive environment for professional growth. If adduced steps are taken with immense seriousness, Pakistan will be able to reverse this troubling trend, and the fruit of human capital will be harnessed for national progress. ■

The writer is an LL.M scholar and a law practitioner at High Court of Sindh, Karachi.



Brain-dead Politicians

trained teachers, a lack of research culture and inadequate resources. This situation has further perpetuated the cycle of brain drain. Besides, environmental degradation has also added fuel to the fire. Issues like pollution, inadequate infrastructure and poor urban planning contribute to the overall decline in the quality of life. It results in more healthcare problems. The major cities of Pakistan are also characterized by overcrowding, traffic congestion and inadequate civic services. It has created a stressful and unhealthy living environment, leading people to consider emigration.

The catastrophic impacts of the spiralling brain drain in every segment of society, ranging from healthcare facilities to engineering and education services, cannot be avoided. In pursuit of better prospects, highly qualified individuals opt to leave the country and go elsewhere. The country has been facing a significant shortage of skilled professionals. The departure of highly proficient and educated individuals deprives the nation of their experience, information and

CHURNA ISLAND

PAKISTAN'S SECOND MARINE PROTECTED AREA



On Sept. 4, the Balochistan government declared Churna Island as the second marine protected area (MPA) in Pakistan, after Astola Island being the first such area (declared in 2017). This initiative will help reverse the damage caused to marine ecosystems and would protect marine life for future generations. Moreover, it will address the challenge of biodiversity loss and help protect the threatened species reported from this area.

What is a marine protected area?

A marine protected area (MPA) is a defined region managed for the long-term conservation of marine resources, ecosystem services or cultural heritage. Within the region, certain activities are limited, or entirely prohibited, to meet specific conservation, habitat protection, ecosystem monitoring or fisheries management objectives. MPAs do not necessarily exclude fishing, research or other human activities; in fact, many MPAs are multi-purpose areas.

The MPAs can have many different names, including marine parks, marine conservation zones, marine reserves, marine sanctuaries and no-take zones. More than 5,000 MPAs have been established around the world. Together, they cover a little more than 8 percent of the ocean, as of 2023. The MPAs can be established in a variety of aquatic habitats. Some MPAs are in the open ocean. Many MPAs protect coastlines. Others cover estuaries, places where rivers enter the sea. In estuaries, freshwater and saltwater mix. Some freshwater habitats are also considered MPAs.

Definition

IUCN defines an MPA as: "A clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term

conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values."

This definition makes it much harder for actions that involve exploitation, such as fisheries, to be claimed as MPAs that protect the ocean. If marine areas involve extraction and have no defined long-term goals of conservation and ocean recovery, they are not MPAs.

What governs MPAs?

MPAs can be found across the globe, often guided by the principles established by the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Global Conservation Standards.

Need for establishing MPAs

a. Biodiversity conservation

MPAs help to conserve the diversity of marine species and their habitats, preserving the delicate balance of marine ecosystems and the services they provide, such as food and oxygen production.

b. Sustainable fisheries

MPAs can help regulate fishing activities and prevent overfishing, ensuring that fish populations are able to recover and remain healthy, which, in turn, supports sustainable fishing practices.

c. Climate change mitigation

MPAs can serve as carbon sinks, helping to absorb and store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and mitigate the impacts of climate change on marine ecosystems.

d. Research and education

MPAs can provide valuable opportunities for scientific research and educational activities, helping to increase our understanding of the marine

e n v i-

ronment and promote ocean literacy.

e. Economic benefits

MPAs can contribute to local economies by attracting tourists, providing opportunities for sustainable tourism and recreation and supporting local fishing communities.

Some treaties, conventions and agreements

a. Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area

It specifically aims to establish a network of specially protected areas to conserve cetaceans. It prohibits the deliberate killing of cetaceans in national waters.

b. Bern Convention

Formulated under the aegis of the European Community Council in 1979, it has been in force since 1982 and covers European states.

c. CITES

Formulated under UNEP in 1973, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) has been in force since 1975 and has worldwide application. CITES regulates international trade of species listed on three appendices.

d. EU Habitats Directive

Formulated by the European Community Council in 1992, the EU Habitats Directive applies to all EU states, including the Azores and Madeira (part of Portugal) and the Canary Islands.

e. CCAMLR

The Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) is a multilateral response to concerns that unregulated increases in krill catches in the Southern Ocean could be detrimental for Antarctic marine ecosystems, particularly for seabirds, seals, whales and fish that depend on krill for food.

Pakistan's MPAs

Pakistan is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity and according to its Kunming-Montreal

Global Biodiversity Framework, states are required to declare 30% of the ocean area as a protected area by 2030 (called 30 x 30). So, complying with this requirement, the government declared, on June 15, 2017, Astola Island as Pakistan's first-ever MPA. More recently, on September 4, the Balochistan government declared Churna Island the second marine protected area of Pakistan. Here is a brief overview of the two MPAs:

1. Astola Island

Covering an area of about 400 square kilometers, Astola is considered the largest island along the coast of Pakistan. Also known as *Jezira Haft Talar Satadip*, or "Island of the Seven Hills," Astola Island has sandy beaches, crystal clear waters and small rocky mountains that stretch across the island.

The island is ecologically important as its beaches provide nesting ground for the endangered green turtle and hawksbill turtle, while also supporting a large variety of migratory birds. The Astola saw-scaled viper is endemic to the island. While treeless, due to the absence of a fresh water source, the island's vegetation consists of scrubs and large bushes.

Moreover, Astola Island's waters are home to around 22 species of corals, as well as dolphin, whale and several species of fish. Even the endangered Arabian Sea humpback whale - a rare marine

mammal only found in Arabian Sea - has been spotted infrequently in the area around the island.

2. Churna Island

Located near Karachi, Churna Island, like Astola Island, is among the limited marine areas in Pakistan that have coral habitats and are termed a biodiversity hotspot. However, this island is being extensively used for scuba diving, snorkelling, cliff jumping and jet skiing, as well as many other recreational activities. The marine ecosystem and diverse wildlife inhabiting Churna Island are under serious threat due to many anthropogenic activities including the development of power plants, single-point mooring and an oil refinery in the immediate vicinity, as well as recreational activities that are conducted at the area. ■

The writer is a member of staff.

The Convention on Biological Diversity

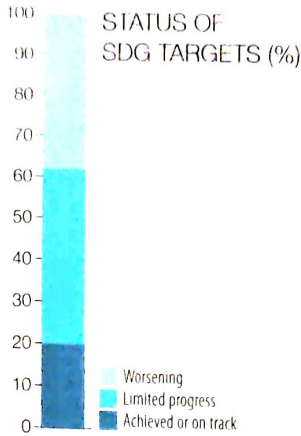
The Convention on Biological Diversity, also known as the Biodiversity Convention, is a multilateral treaty opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It is a key document regarding sustainable development. It comes under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The Conference of Parties (COP) is the governing body of the convention. It consists of the 196 governments that have ratified the treaty. Its secretariat is in Montreal, Canada. Only two member states of the United Nations are not parties to the CBD, namely: the USA and the Vatican. It has 3 main objectives:

1. Conservation of biological diversity.
2. Sustainable use of the components of biological diversity.
3. Fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

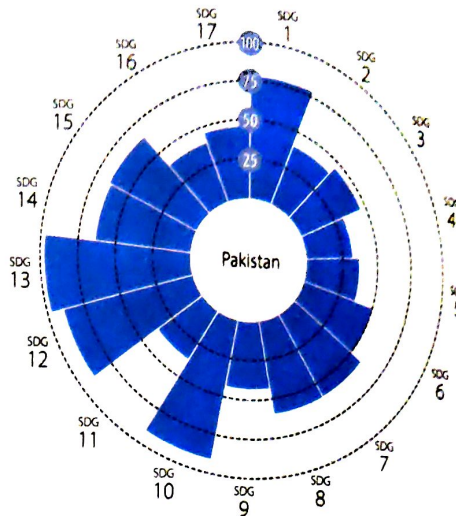


OVERALL PERFORMANCE

COUNTRY RANKING **137** /167



AVERAGE PERFORMANCE BY SDG



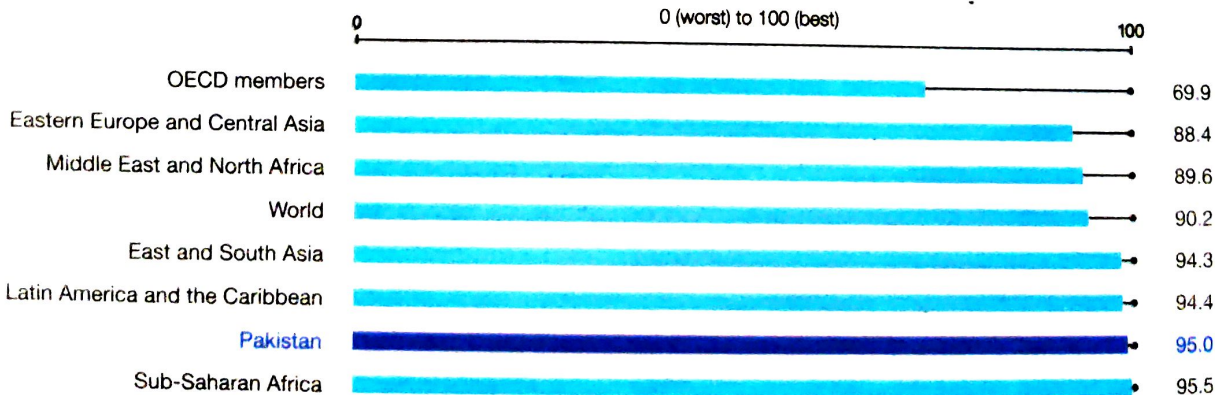
SDG DASHBOARDS AND TRENDS



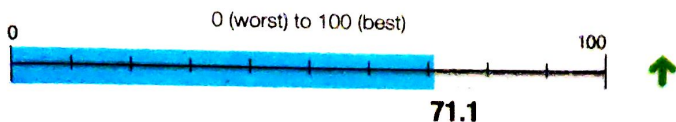
Major challenges Significant challenges Challenges remain SDG achieved Information unavailable
Decreasing Stagnating Moderately improving On track or maintaining SDG achievement Information unavailable

Note: The full title of each SDG is available here: <https://sdgs.un.org>

INTERNATIONAL SPILLOVER INDEX



STATISTICAL PERFORMANCE INDEX



MISSING DATA IN SDG INDEX

2%

Religious Extremism

Who is the culprit?

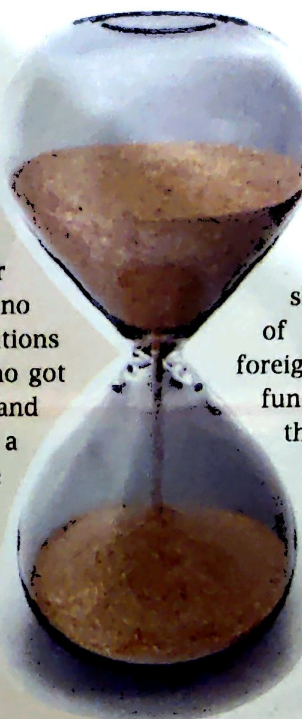
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Syed Yasir Shah

Pity the Christian families whose dozens of houses were torched on blasphemy accusations; grievances for the death of Mishaal Khan who got murdered by a frenzied mob for alleged blasphemous remarks for which no evidence was later found; and commiserations to those hundreds of young students who got sodomized by their seminary teachers and were later left with no option but to accept a reconciliation deal. These are some of the many instances where extremist elements had their own ways of justifying their love for religion. However, the question here arises: what drives them to perform such acts? What are the ultimate psychological and philosophical reasons for such an eccentric behaviour? Is it a developed mindset or the laxity of the state towards such elements that gives them the freedom to paint the town red, even after committing a heinous crime? In fact, what sense of achievement makes their faces look so calm, after going against their religious obligation? Therefore, it is significant to delve into the issue to examine whether it is the helpless state, a senile society or a retarded mindset that allows such fundamentalist tendencies to penetrate the social strata. It is important to determine who is the real culprit.

Religious Extremism and the American Mullah: How do religious parties weaponize religion

Unfortunately, in Pakistan, religious parties frequently weaponize religion to further their interests. For this, Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), a religio-political party, presents itself as a prime example. One often sees how the TLP gives its eye-opening entry after a certain period of time. Whether to remain relevant or to pursue its own secret missions, the Saad Rizvi-led TLP uses religious agenda



to incite the masses. Interestingly, the power quarters usually ignore the happenings as if the untouchables are running amok. Apart from the 'prize distribution ceremony' after the Faizabad showdown, religious elements have a history of receiving financial support, even from foreign countries. Not to count the wherewithal funded to breed extremism in Pakistan during the Soviet-Afghan war and the American War on Terror — the USA, in 2009, reportedly provided \$36,607 to the Sunni Ittehad Council to hold anti-Taliban rallies — the very Taliban who was the state's good ally during the 1979-89 Soviet-Afghan war. More interestingly, the funding that was given to seemingly cool down religious fanaticism in the country backfired. It further encouraged the extremist mindset with the advent of demonstrations in support of Mumtaz Qadri, the assassin of the then-Governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer. Furthermore, in recent days, we have also seen how religious elements come out to be successful in blackmailing the government to maintain their image, with Islamabad dharna being the latest example in this regard.

Now, by creating the context given above in your minds, imagine for a second why these religious elements would not hesitate to lynch men on unproven blasphemy allegations? Why would they wait for long, tedious court hearings when they have the power to threaten judges and deliver the so-called justice instantly? Why would they wait for the delivery of justice when they have their fellows waiting to garland them? Why would they not rape minors when they already know they would get away with it because of the so-called attire they maintain? On observing this, why people should not expect more egregious violations of law besides the incidents at Shanti Nagar (1997), Sangla Hill (2005), Gojra (2009), Sialkot (2021),



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NATIONAL

and Jaranwala (2023). Interestingly, according to BF Skinner's operant conditioning, behaviour is more likely to recur if followed by positive consequences. It implies that if extremist acts are met with inaction, indifference or rewards, the perpetrators may feel validated or empowered, further encouraging extremist behaviour. Therefore, the mindset will persist if the state fails to take strict action against such acts. Similarly, the 'Social Learning Theory' by Albert Bandura explains how these extremist behaviours spread upon imitation by other members of society. It means that more will happen until the formation of concrete policies to curb the menace of extremism.

The Social Mindset: A rotten system of thought

However, foreign funding and the ignorance of the state are not the only factors contributing to the whole process. It is also the social mindset that plays a critical role in the nourishment of the objectionable system of thought. Our society, having its foundations on our self-interpreted Islamic principles, is devoid of innovative and modern thinking. It does not allow diverse viewpoints to exist. Self-righteousness is overly dominant among its members. To one's disappointment, with the rise of social media platforms, these rotten values are eroding the societal footing every day. For this, there can be multiple reasons. Nonetheless, it is not the topic of the discussion.

So, when a child opens up his eyes in a society where patience, inclusivity and acceptance are rarely found, he is likely to get influenced by bigotry, illiberality and orthodoxy prevailing in society. This would ultimately increase sociopolitical polarization in a country, which may prevail even in the seemingly invulnerable factions of society.

Unsurprisingly, a total of 2.89 million people voted for the TLP in the 2024 elections, 0.76 million more than in the 2018 general elections. Astonishingly, the TLP got more votes in Islamabad than in the entire Balochistan. According to Gallup Pakistan, in Balochistan, only 23,675 people voted for the TLP, whereas in Islamabad, 29,830 people supported the

religio-political party, an increase of 9,065 votes from the 2018 elections. In this regard, a research study titled 'Rise in Public Approval of Religious Extremism in Pakistan' by Syeda Ulya Ehsen reinforces the aforementioned statistics. The study concludes that in Pakistan, districts populated by the middle class, upper-middle class and rich (elite) individuals are more likely to support religious extremism (and vote for parties of these kinds) than those with a predominantly poor population. These findings are, in fact, alarming. This can eventually prove to be a ticking bomb that would explode without any prior intimation.

However, there is a plethora of reasons for the development of such societal mindset. For instance, defective educational curricula, improper parenting and identity crisis, in addition to the aforementioned causes, contribute to this process.

Finding the Actual Culprit:

Are we all responsible?

The main question is still unanswered: who is the real culprit? It is not possible to blame a single entity. As evident from the above debate, state negligence, coupled with declining societal values, mainly contributes to religious

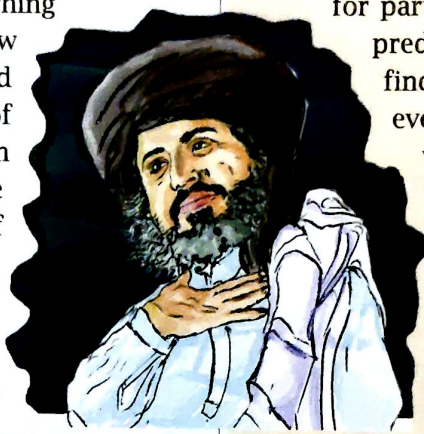
extremism. Unfortunately, society, in the majority, raises children devoid of essential human values. The state, then, protects such mindset, ultimately giving these elements a sense of security.

What should be Done?

By adopting the following measures, it is possible to curb the rising threat of extremism.

It is essential to redefine the educational curricula at all levels. Educational institutes should inculcate liberal values in their students. Those institutions must create an environment that gives exposure to diverse viewpoints. Most importantly, parenting, as a separate subject, should be taught in universities, enabling future parents to learn the art of raising children.

Moreover, state institutions should realize their responsibilities. They must perform their constitutional and legal duties efficiently. Only by following this way can we make Pakistan a better place to live! ■





Ansar Hafeez

Methane, a colourless, odourless, main component of natural gas, traps massive amounts of heat in the atmosphere.

Research has shown that over a 20-year timescale, methane, with a chemical formula CH_4 , traps around 84 times as much heat as does carbon dioxide (CO_2) – the latter is released by burning fossil fuels and is probably the most famous greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming.

The key difference between the two gases is how long they stick around. On average, CH_4 fades away after about 12 years while CO_2 keeps warming the planet over centuries. This makes CO_2 the main contributor to climate change. However, potent methane still wreaks plenty of havoc even in its short lifetime. It's incredibly responsible for about one-third of global warming since the Industrial Revolution.

Sources of methane

Methane sometimes comes from non-human sources like wetlands. These habitats contain things like permafrost, which is frozen ground that's also filled with carbon from animals and plants that have been dead and buried there since aeons.

As temperatures rise, wetland permafrost thaws, unleashing carbon, previously locked in the ice, in the form of CO_2 and CH_4 .

However, scientists believe that as much as 60% of methane that makes it into the atmosphere comes from human activities. That can be from agriculture – think cows' burps and farts and manure fertilizer – but also from decomposing waste in landfills and the energy sector.

How is the energy sector responsible?

Most energy consumed by humans comes from burning fossil fuels, e.g. coal, oil and gas. Oil and gas are responsible for most energy sector methane emissions. This greenhouse gas pours out when

companies produce, transport and store these fossil fuels.

Methane emissions can happen unintentionally. For example, it often escapes into the atmosphere when the equipment is rusty or damaged or even has something as simple as a loose screw.

Then there is gas flaring. That's when operators burn off natural gas linked to oil production. Flaring turns methane into CO_2 that then goes into the atmosphere, but raw methane can still escape during the process.

Sometimes companies release small amounts of natural gas, in a process known as venting, directly into the atmosphere. Operators do so because processing and transporting the relatively small amount of gas that comes out of the ground during oil extraction can be an expensive venture. Sometimes, they do it for safety reasons, such as to reduce dangerous pressure increases.

What can we do to reduce methane emissions?

The solutions can be surprisingly simple at times. Oil and gas companies can slash their methane emissions by a whopping 75% if they spot and fix leaks, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). It quite literally comes down to plumbing and updating faulty equipment.

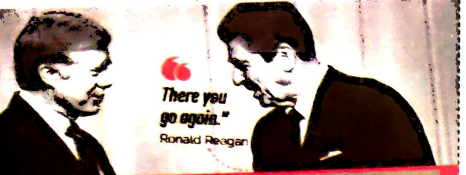
That's why the European Union passed a new regulation in May this year that will force fossil fuel companies to routinely measure, report and reduce how much methane they are emitting. If they spot a leak, they need to fix it within 15 working days.

The regulation also bans flaring and venting in most cases. Venting is only allowed if there is a safety emergency. Flaring can only happen if it's not technically possible to reinject the natural gas into the ground on-site or transport it somewhere else. ■

1960
Richard Nixon vs John F Kennedy
The first general-election debate — and the first one to be televised — drew nearly half of American TV viewers watching at home.



1980
Ronald Reagan vs Jimmy Carter

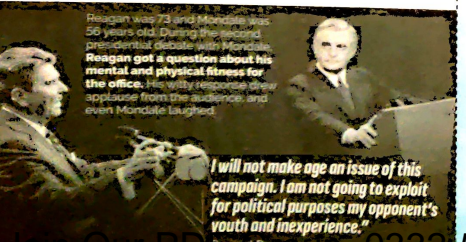


There you go again."
Ronald Reagan

Republican nominee Ronald Reagan delivered this now-famous line during the 1980 presidential debate, one week before Election Day. He was referring to Carter's reaction to Carter's comments on Iran's release of the American hostages. The one-liner worked so well in diffusing Carter's attack that Reagan often used it in news conferences and repeated it in a 1984 debate against former Vice President Walter Mondale.

Reagan won the White House.

1984
Ronald Reagan vs Walter Mondale



I will not make age an issue of this campaign. I am not going to exploit for political purposes my opponent's youth and inexperience."

US PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

Contenders face off in fiery debate

Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris and her Republic opponent Donald Trump locked horns on key issues in their only presidential debate



ECONOMY

Trump: We have the most terrible economy in our history because of lockdowns. A country built on the backs of the people of our country are dying with what they've done.

Harris: I believe in the dreams of the American people... (I) have a plan to build what I call an opportunity economy.



IMMIGRATION

Trump: We have millions of people pouring into our country from prisons and jails, from mental institutions and insane asylums.

Harris: Congress came up with a border security bill... You know what happened to that bill? Donald Trump called up some folks in Congress and said, 'kill the bill!'



ABORTION

Trump: It's the vote of the people now. It's not tied up in the federal government. I did a great service in doing it.

Harris: The government and Donald Trump, certainly, should not be telling a woman what to do with her body.



GAZA CONFLICT



Trump: She hates Israel. If she's president, I believe that Israel will not exist within two years from now.

Harris: It must end immediately... we need a ceasefire deal, and we need the hostages out.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Trump: I want the war to stop. I want to save lives... I think it's in the US's best interest.

Harris: If Donald Trump were president, Putin would be sitting in Kyiv right now.



GUN CONTROL

Trump: She has a plan to confiscate everybody's gun.

Harris: Tim Walz and I are both gun owners. We're not taking any of these guns away.



CAPITOL ATTACK



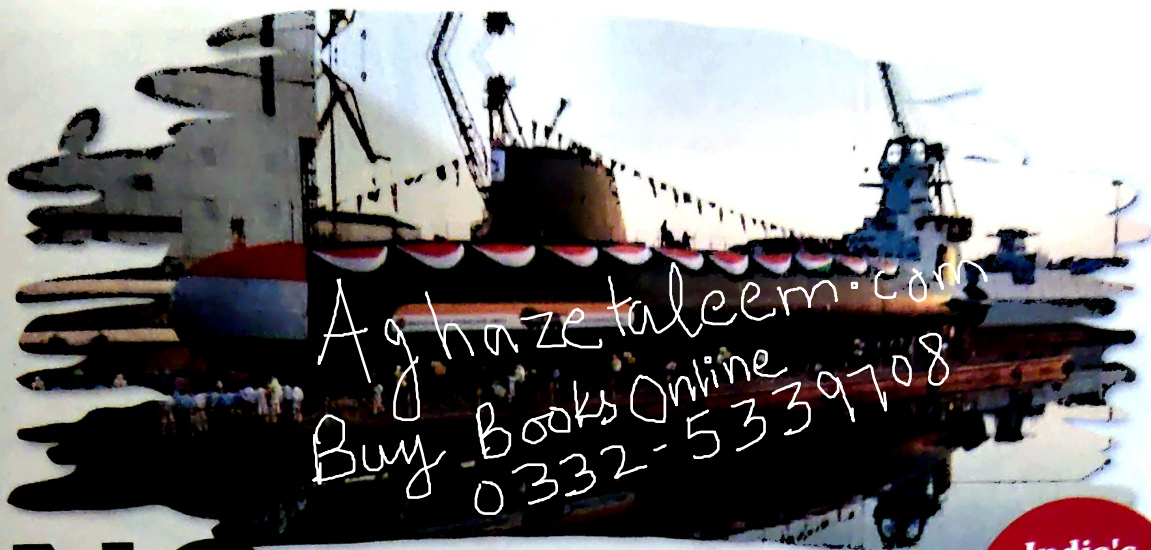
Trump: I had nothing to do with that, other than they asked me to make a speech.

Harris: The [then] president incited a violent mob to attack our nation's capital.

They're eating the dogs, the people that came in, they're eating the cats. They're eating the pets of the people that live there. - Donald Trump

It's important to remind the former president, you're not running against Joe Biden, you are running against me. - Kamala Harris

GK CORNER



INS ARIGHAAT

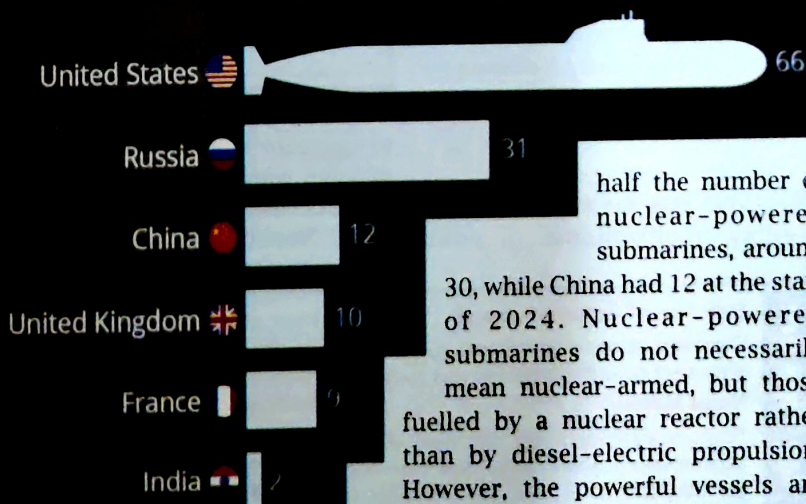
India's
second
nuclear
submarine

On August 29, India's second nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine, the INS Arighaat, was commissioned into service at Visakhapatnam. The 6,000-tonne INS Arighaat will join its predecessor, the nuclear submarine INS Arihant, as a key component of India's nuclear triad, which refers to a country's ability to launch nuclear missiles from platforms in the air, land and at sea. However, the technological advancements undertaken indigenously on this submarine make it significantly more advanced than Arihant, which is presently armed with a 750 km range K-15 Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) while a 3,500 km range SLBM K-4 is under development, having been tested for the first time in 2020. The construction of INS Arighaat involved advanced design and manufacturing technology, detailed research and development, the use of special materials, complex engineering and highly skilled workmanship. It is distinguished by its indigenous systems and equipment, which were conceptualized, designed, manufactured and integrated by

Indian scientists, industry and naval personnel, the Indian defence ministry said. India is part of a select group of countries with nuclear triad capabilities. Data from the International Institute for Strategic Studies' publication The Military Balance shows that the US has by far the largest nuclear-powered fleet worldwide at 66. Russia has less than

Only Six Countries Operate Nuclear Submarines

Global fleet of nuclear-powered submarines



half the number of nuclear-powered submarines, around 30, while China had 12 at the start of 2024. Nuclear-powered submarines do not necessarily mean nuclear-armed, but those fuelled by a nuclear reactor rather than by diesel-electric propulsion. However, the powerful vessels are often also used for this purpose. ■

“My preparation for CSS and PMS exams was greatly facilitated by JWT Magazine, relevant books and insightful content from WTI's YouTube channel”

In Conversation with
Amna Khawar Warraich

9th in Punjab; PMS 2022-23



Jahangir's World Times (JWT): First of all, please tell something about your educational background.

Amna Khawar Warraich (AKW): I am a graduate of Punjab University, Lahore, from where I earned a master's degree in Chemistry with specialization in Organic Chemistry, and was honoured with a Gold Medal for outstanding academic achievement.

JWT: How much helpful did you find Jahangir's World Times (JWT) in your preparation for the PMS exam?

AKW: My preparation for the CSS and PMS exams was greatly facilitated by JWT magazine, relevant books and insightful content from WTI's YouTube channel.

JWT: What was the significance of reading a newspaper in your

Detailed Marks Sheet

| Subject | Marks |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Compulsory Subjects | |
| English Essay | 50 |
| English (Précis & Composition) | 60 |
| General Knowledge | 62 |
| Urdu | 60 |
| Pakistan Affairs | 65 |
| Islamic Studies | 66 |
| Optional Subjects | |
| 1. Chemistry | 149 |
| 2. Political Science | 133 |
| 3. Punjabi | 150 |
| Total Written | 795 |
| Viva Voce | 113.7 |
| Grand Total | 908.7 |

preparation? How did staying updated with current affairs shape your success?

AKW: Staying informed is crucial for

aspirants. Newspapers and social media platforms were vital sources for daily updates on current affairs, keeping me abreast of national and global developments. Moreover, newspapers also shaped my expression and analytical skills, which helped me out in my exams.

JWT: What was your overall strategy for cracking the PMS exam?

AKW: Hard work + Smart work + Belief = Success

JWT: What was your approach to time management throughout the preparation process? How did you balance multiple subjects and cover the vast syllabus?

AKW: As I was already serving as lecturer of Chemistry, I used to divide my whole day into sections where I would prepare for the exam. I can recall that I also did my written practice when my students attempted their tests. I didn't waste a minute, even during my job hours.

JWT: What were the challenges you encountered during your preparation

My Tips on:

Selection of optional subjects

Choose subjects wisely as per your interest and select those that align with your degree.

Notes-Making

First make long notes because many aspirants are unable to grab things in the first go with short notes. But, yes, do prepare

short notes after that for revision, with bullets, crispy headings, flowcharts and maps, etc.

Revision

Never sit the exam without revision because the stress makes you blank sometimes if you are there without revising the stuff. Do revision from your notes.

EXAM PACK



My Interview Experience

It was a 30-minute-long process where the panel covered all the areas from Islamic History to Current Affairs, to General Knowledge and all optional subjects. Whether I knew the answers or not, I remained calm and composed during the interview. Overall, it was a rewarding experience.

Journey and the ways in which you overcame them.

AKW: The journey of competitive exams has many ups and downs, not only for me, but it's a story shared by many aspirants. I faced the issue of time management because I had to carry things along with my job. Although demotivation had engulfed me when I remained unallocated in my first attempt, I tackled all the challenges with self-belief, belief in Allah Almighty and the unrelenting support of my family.

JWT: What, in your opinion, is the key to getting through the compulsory papers of the PMS exam, especially that of General Knowledge?

AKW: I must say that Essay and General Knowledge are the make-or-break subjects in the PMS exam. I would advise aspirants to do written practice for essay and précis, give time to Islamiyat by preparing it along with contemporary analysis, and properly prepare for GK paper as it has negative marking. Make separate notes for this paper by doing daily tasks, as it has vast and unlimited areas to cover.

JWT: How should answers be written to get maximum marks in the written part of the PMS exam?

AKW: As per the requirement of the question – with correct interpretation of it – good paper presentation, self-explanatory headings, flowcharts, diagrams, maps; in short, a structured and relevant answer with beautiful gamishing!

Advice for Fresh Aspirants
Remain consistent as consistency is the key to success.

JWT: How did you structure your Essay?

AKW: There are multiple strategies to tackle essay, but the most important thing is to add updated figures, the latest facts and case studies. I structured my essay in the simplest way with practical manifestations and updated cases in point. I attempted my essay using simple and easy vocabulary.

JWT: Since you have scored excellent marks in Chemistry and Punjabi, what was your strategy for both these papers?

AKW: Although I had a degree in chemistry, I never left it unattended; I prepared it on a daily basis, along with other subjects. As I am from a Punjabi-speaking family and have a good grip on it, I made it my strength by working on it and doing written practice.

JWT: Should there be some word limit kept in mind while writing answers?

AKW: Instead of word limit, keep time

management in your mind. Allot equal time to all questions and try to structure your answer accordingly by writing the most appropriate arguments from your knowledge sack.

JWT: Is it better to attempt optional papers in Urdu or should one go with English only?

AKW: Both are equally good. Go with the one you feel comfortable in. I have all subjects in English but Islamiyat in Urdu. Do opt for the writing mode that makes you comfortable.

JWT: How one should choose Optional Subjects?

AKW: According to one's interest, scoring trend, analysis of past papers and syllabus! I was advised by many against opting for chemistry, but I did a thorough analysis and went with it. *Alhamdulillah*, I secured excellent marks in it.

JWT: Who deserves the credit for your success?

AKW: After thanking Allah Almighty countlessly, I credit my mentors, friends and family with this success. □

| Rapid Fire | |
|------------------------|---|
| Your inspiration | My father and elder brother |
| Attempts | 2 |
| Schooling medium | Urdu |
| Your qualification | Graduation in Chemistry |
| Alma mater | School of Chemistry, PU, Lahore |
| Your study schedule | 8-10 hours a day |
| Your sources | Newspapers, magazines, You Tube, books |
| Your hobbies | Horse riding, kitchen gardening |
| Your strength | Belief in Allah Almighty and my prayers |
| Fave personality | Hazrat Muhammad (SAWW) |
| Fave book | Purification of Heart by Hamza Yusuf |
| Fave quote | "Remember your own faults when you want to mention of others." — Hazrat Muhammad (SAWW) |
| Secret of your success | Hard work, Consistency, optimism |
| Your role model | My father |



Confabulating with **Shafique Ahmed**

Assistant Executive Engineer
Local Government Department, Sindh

"The World Times Magazine played a key part to cover my GK and Current Affairs portion"

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Jahangir's World Times (JWT): Please tell us about your educational background.

Shafique Ahmed (SA): I am a Civil Engineer, having a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering and a master's in Hydraulics and Irrigation.

JWT: What were your principal sources for the preparation of Assistant Executive Engineer exam?

SA: I used a variety of sources. The World Times Magazine played a key part in covering my GK and Current Affairs portions whereas I covered the engineering part through books specific to those subjects and topics.

JWT: How long did it take you to prepare for this exam?

SA: It took 2 to 3 years. I qualified in my third attempt for this post.

JWT: How much helpful was Jahangir's World Times during your preparations?

SA: JWT is the finest way to stay updated on national and international current affairs. I got good marks in GK and Current Affairs because of the JWT.

JWT: How was your experience at the World Times Institute?

SA: I had an online connection with the WTI. I followed its Facebook and Instagram profiles. I still watch its YouTube channel where my favourite part is daily news and the podcasts. These helped me a lot.

JWT: How should the new aspirants start preparations for the various one-paper exams?

SA: I think they should concentrate on improving their English grammar and vocabulary because without these, you cannot translate your thoughts and knowledge into words.

JWT: What areas should they focus on?

SA: English and Current Affairs.

JWT: What, in your opinion, is an ideal timetable for a sound preparation?

SA: Mostly, aspirants sacrifice their sleep, but I believe that early morning to noon is a good time for sound preparation.

JWT: What strategy should the in-job aspirants adopt as they have scant time at their disposal?

JWT Edit. Board

SA: Since they have limited time to cover the syllabus, they should do SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) study. For in-job aspirants, I suggest that they should give adequate time after working hours to their exam preparation.

JWT: How did you handle the interview pressure while before the panel?

SA: The person interviewing you is a human, don't make him or her god. I gained the confidence when I appeared before the panel by making up my mind that I have already been shortlisted for the job and I deserve it. I relaxed and listened to the panel calmly and attentively, and they observed that I am a good listener and thoughtful aspirant. So, it is my advice to all aspirants that they must not make interview a debate.

JWT: Please share some questions the panellists asked during the interview.

SA: I'd like to divide their questions into two categories: general (GK, Current Affairs and Pakistan Studies) and Subject-specific (Civil Engineering). In the general category, they asked about Muslim League formation and its founding members, when and why the Khilafat Movement happened, the capital cities of France and Germany, the governors of the State Bank of Pakistan, etc. From the subject-specific category, they asked about the formation of highways, soil, building structures, etc.

JWT: On the basis of your experience, what tips you would give to the prospective aspirants?

SA: On the basis of my experience I'd like to suggest the following tips:

1. Build English vocabulary and learn the correct use of grammar.
2. Make a pragmatic study plan and stick to it.
3. For GK and Current Affairs, read newspapers and Jahangir's World Times.
4. Take break for a few days and visit some places out of the town.
5. Don't give up if you fail the exam. Try next time with greater energy. ■

Madiha Kahlown

At a time when the economy of Pakistan needs to move towards stability and sustainable growth, the ongoing economic challenges are rendering the efforts being made to overcome them fruitless, owing to a host of factors. Although significant progress has been made, particularly in terms of remittances and credit ratings, the economy still needs a boost, which could serve as the foundation upon which sustainable economic growth can be built.

Pakistan's economic potential has been marred by persistent challenges that have hindered its growth prospects. A complex interplay of fiscal imbalances, resource constraints, energy shortages, export vulnerabilities, human capital deficiencies and political instability has conspired to impede the nation's progress. The Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war further impacted the country's economy in all negative ways. Amidst all this, the Finance Ministry, in its recently released fifth quarterly performance report to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on \$1.5 billion Building Resilience with Active Country-cyclical Expenditures (BRACE), has said that Pakistan continues to face five major and persistent economic challenges: (i) Fuel Prices; (ii) Edible Oil; (iii) Poverty; (iv) Inflation; and (v) Floods.

Fuel prices have relatively high multiplier effects and high fuel prices

can cause decrease in economic activity across different sectors. They not only reduce the direct consumption of petroleum products but also shrink other sectors such as electricity production, industrial demand, goods transportation, travelling, mining, construction and many others.

The report further stated that after fuel, edible oil has the most impact on the GDP and household consumption, but it is almost double for the poor. Due to the relatively higher elasticity of oil with its price, demand shock is greater than wheat and almost double in poor households.

As Pakistan remains largely dependent on imported palm oil (all from Malaysia and Indonesia), it remains highly prone to any upward shock in prices and can also cause deterioration in the healthy diet structure of children.

The Russian-Ukraine war crisis has a serious impact on poverty that can increase the burden on the already tightened fiscal space. Post-Disaster Needs Assessment Report of the 2022 floods stated that the

national poverty rate may increase by 3.7-4.0 percent by pushing 8.4-9.1 million more people into poverty due to the devastating calamity.

Any potential cash handouts or expansion of Benazir Income Support Programmes (BISP) can further increase the existing high fiscal deficits.

Rising inflation, particularly food inflation (highest in the history of Pakistan), increases in administered prices of petroleum products, electricity and gas, and the continuous depreciation of the rupee have a negative impact on household consumption, which will lead to greater poverty, particularly in rural areas. While the global crisis, because of the Russian-Ukraine War, was expected to result in slowing down the economic growth in Pakistan, its adverse impact on poverty, food insecurity and deteriorated diet quality are likely to be more pronounced.

However, the cataclysmic floods in 2022 in Pakistan that affected 33 million people and 1.8 million hectares of cropland; damaging cotton and rice crops, perishing 1.16 million, as per the NDMA Post-Disaster Needs Assessment Report, besides major damages to public infrastructure and private properties will lead to lower economic growth in FY2023, higher poverty and food insecurity and worsened diet quality.

The fiscal side

On the fiscal front, despite encouraging revenue

Pakistan's Economic Challenges

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DOMESTIC ISSUES SPECIAL

performance, the expenditure side is under pressure attributed to higher markup payments. However, government measures to control non-markup spending helped in improving the primary surplus during the first six months of fiscal year 2024.

The overall fiscal deficit has been widened by 2.3 percent of GDP, while the primary surplus improved by 1.7 percent of GDP during July–December FY 2024. During the first half of FY 2024, the FBR revenues grew by 30 percent to reach PKR 4,469 billion against PKR 3,429 billion in the same period of last year.

Non-tax revenue witnessed growth of 108.8 percent.

The budgeted vs actual expenditures position shows that 19 percent of annual allocated budget is utilized during the first quarter of FY 2024.

No subsidy has been budgeted for providing subsidized gas to export-

oriented industries. Henceforth, no subsidy has been released during the first quarter of fiscal year 2023–24. Pending claims of Sui Northern Gas Pipeline and Sui Southern Gas Company Limited amounting to Rs730 million for providing subsidized RLNG to export sector during 2022–23 are yet to be cleared.

The budget for “subsidy for import of urea of fertilizer” has been allocated under Grant No 45–FC21G01–Grants, Subsidies and Miscellaneous Expenditure being dealt by Finance Division.

BISP disbursed PKR 69,222 million to 2.769 million flood victim families — PKR 25,000 per family —

across Pakistan during FY 2022–23. To meet this budget requirement from within the approved allocation of BISP for 2022–23, an amount of Rs50,419 million was re-allocated under the head “Emergency Flood Relief Cash Assistance”. The remaining amount was charged to the head “unconditional cash transfer.”

The writer is a student at the University of Narowal.

BRACE Background

The Covid-19 pandemic sent shock waves through the world economy which was further aggravated by Russia-Ukraine war. The cascading effect of Covid and the war resulted in income and job losses and demanded massive spending by the Government of Pakistan (GoP) on social protection to protect the most vulnerable population and promote economic recovery.

The GoP used digital tools to manage the massive amounts of administrative data needed to monitor the welfare of

households and individuals and to design better-targeted programs.

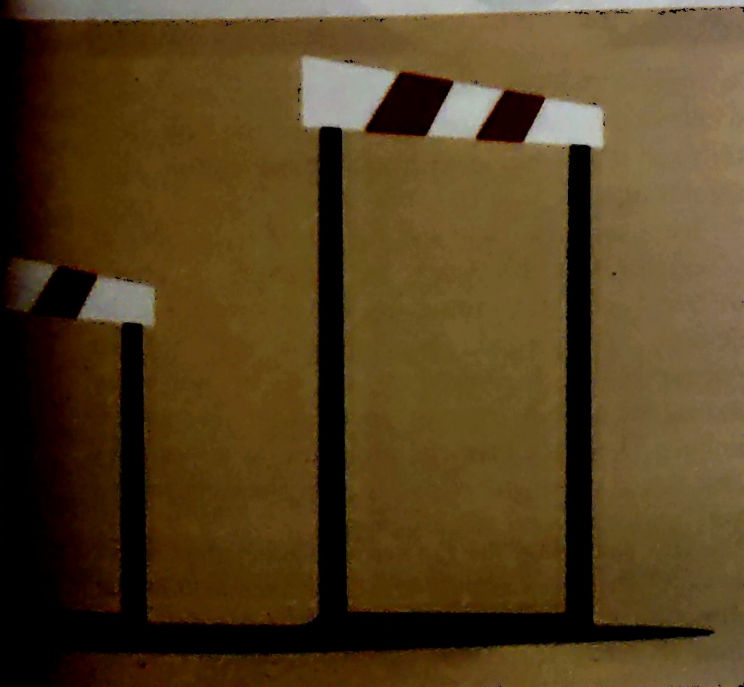
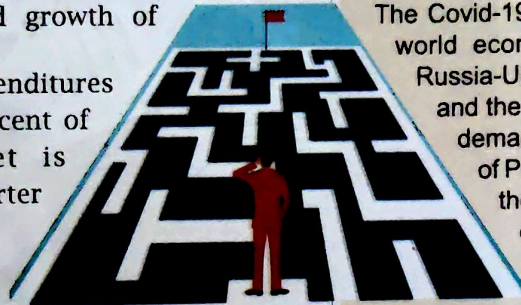
To support the government's efforts to provide immediate relief to the people of Pakistan, the ADB approved a Countercyclical Support Facility Loan with a size of \$1.5 billion on October 21, 2022—Building Resilience with Active Countercyclical Expenditures Program (BRACE).

The monitoring and evaluation framework of the BRACE program builds on the ADB's CARES program and is primarily based on the recommendations made by the Auditor General of Pakistan in its audit report on expenditures incurred for the government's Covid-19 pandemic response.

The objectives of the framework are to:

- (i) ensure regular and systematic reporting on the countercyclical development expenditure program (CDEP) announced in FY 2023 national budget, with a particular focus on the priority expenditure items outlined in the BRACE Program Design and Monitoring Framework (DMF);
- (ii) provide a platform for coordinated and informed discussions between the government and development partners on the implementation of the CDEP;
- (iii) continue the ongoing policy dialogue with the government on its program to address longstanding structural constraints.

Under the monitoring and evaluation framework, the executing agency, i.e. the Ministry of Finance, is required to conduct quarterly meetings with the implementing agencies, that is, Ministries of Economic Affairs, Industries and Production, Food Security and Research and BISP and other related agencies to review the progress of the implementation of the CDEP. ■



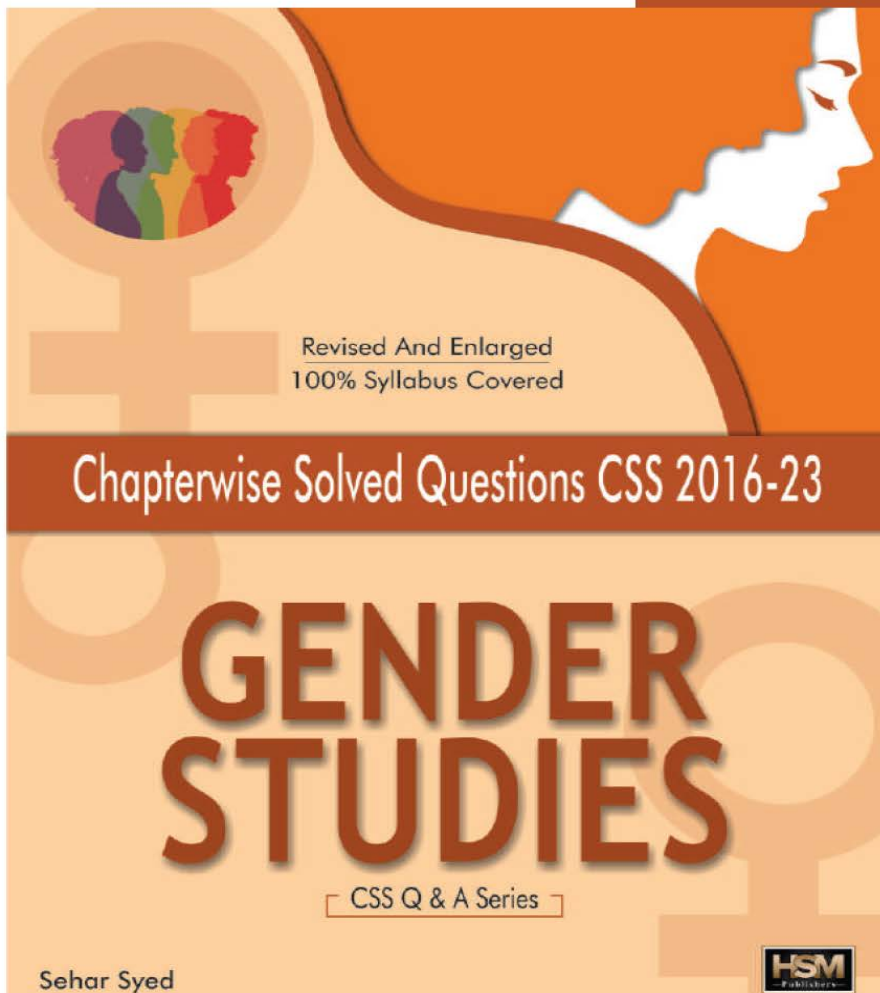


One of the major concerns for those working to improve the quality of education in Pakistan is the deteriorating research culture in the country. Several factors are hindering quality research work in Pakistan. Thousands of MPhil and PhD scholars are teaching in different institutes, but they have failed to produce any notable research work in years. It is said that excellence comes with motivation. In the case of Pakistan, however, it is often observed that students tend to avoid research thesis and prefer other projects in the final years of their degree. The main reason behind this behaviour is that students are not well aware of the importance of research and the techniques used to conduct it. Another dilemma is that critical thinking has no room in our educational spaces, and new ideas are not encouraged. Therefore, students avoid the risk of losing grades by not opting for research work. Students face many obstacles if they choose the research track. The most significant one is the language barrier. A majority of students face difficulty in research work because of their inability to analyze literature and information presented in the English language. Selecting an appropriate topic for research is the next major problem for students because they are unaware of the latest research techniques. Lack of knowledge about the interpretation of data by using various software such as SPSS and NVivo, etc. becomes another nightmare for them. Students play safe and choose traditional genres and common topics for their research work to acquire a degree. Most of the students of MPhil and PhD are those who have been managing studies and jobs simultaneously, their busy routine does not allow them to give full attention to their research work. Further, they do not pursue research work after completion of their degree. Faculty members seem to have their problems. They have the academic responsibilities to fulfil with other administrative duties to perform. At the same time, they have to supervise students studying topics of diverse nature. They remain busy delivering lectures

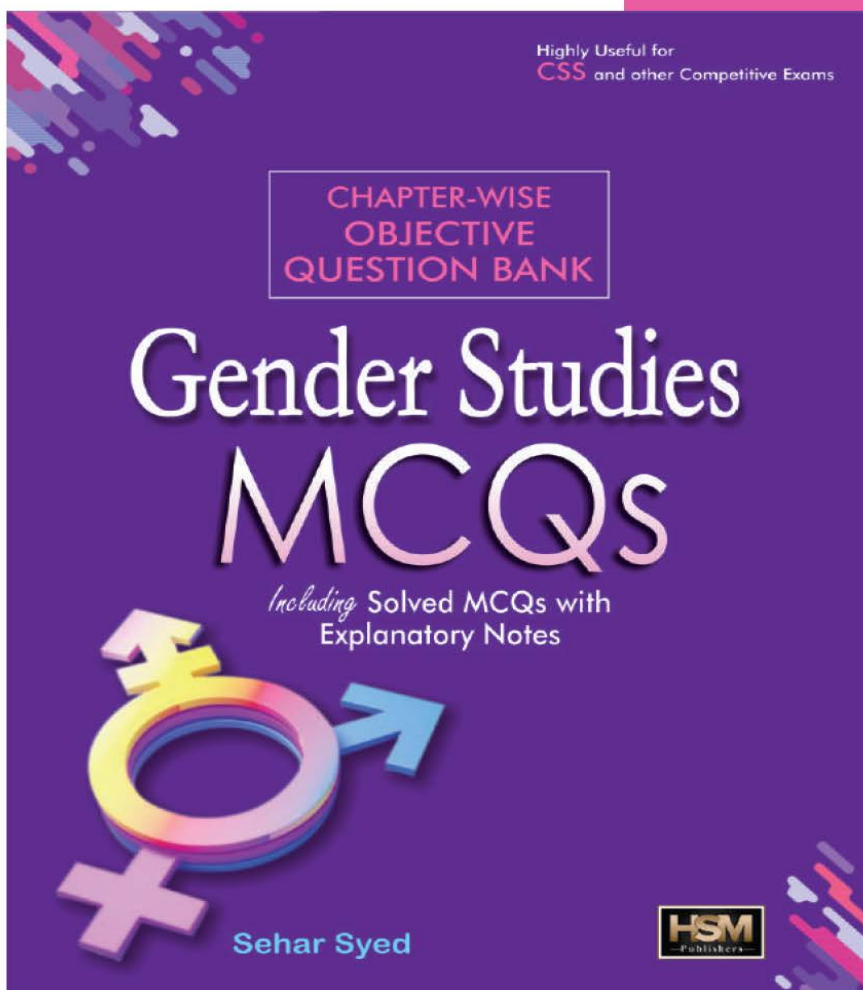
Abstruse Research Culture in Pakistan



in classes, checking assignments/papers and giving feedback on queries to students all the time. It is obvious that while performing these duties, they cannot manage time to conduct their research work. To learn modern ways and the latest techniques of research, it is necessary for teachers to attend different seminars, workshops, and fellowships in the country and abroad. Unfortunately, they are not encouraged and allowed to do so by university management and relevant government educational bodies. They face financial problems, as universities and the government refuse to give them incentives and funds to pursue research work. The HEC can bridge the gap between policymakers and researchers by developing a research agenda to set the direction of research activities conducted at universities. It needs to reform campus research culture,



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which is still far from being inspiring for scholars. During the discussions in a recent consultative workshop organized by the HEC's National Academy of Higher Education, held in collaboration with the British Council and Coventry University UK, it was agreed by all researchers that the institutional framework for research in Pakistan is weak and procedural delays in the process of registration and various administrative obstacles create stress among research students. It takes too long to get approval of a workable research topic from the Board of Advanced Studies and Research. Further, the relationship between the students and the supervisors is not clearly understood. Financial issues, peer pressure, logistics and health problems also increase the level of stress among students.

Thus, a good working relationship between supervisors and students is vital to deal with the issues of work stress and social pressure during the bumpy and messy part of a research journey. Proper supervisory guidance and resilience of students demonstrated through a sense of belonging and commitment contribute to the successful completion of the PhD project.

Further, an effective institutional framework and research-oriented culture on campus are vital for the successful endeavours of many on-campus research scholars. For completion of research projects, students must remain consistent in their reading and writing work and improve their calibre through research training. They should have a clear understanding of the research process and how to manage expectations and meet university standards. They should build on their previous knowledge in the field or select the topic that has sparked their curiosity. Further, they should plan on how to fund their studies in addition to having good family support and peer cooperation. Moreover, they should keep themselves passionate and motivated through self-counselling to cope with stress while working in isolation.

The absence of a strong institutional framework causes demotivation among students and fails to develop the research skills required for the completion of the research project. The first year of the 4-5 year PhD journey in Pakistan is based on coursework, just about repeating the themes already covered at the Master's or MPhil level. Students should rather be made to undergo rigorous research training to develop their blue-sky thinking. They must acquaint themselves with criticality, objectivity and other scientific principles. During the first year of their research degree, they must learn academic writing techniques, research skills, research ethics, communication and time-management skills before embarking on the research journey. These training

modules will enable students to dust off their knowledge and skills and be ready to apply them in collecting authentic and reliable data to generate new findings for the benefit of the research community and wider society.

Under the present institutional framework and curriculum, the timeline is not strictly followed.

Thus, completion of a PhD takes double the time in Pakistan compared to other countries that manage time. Overlap of

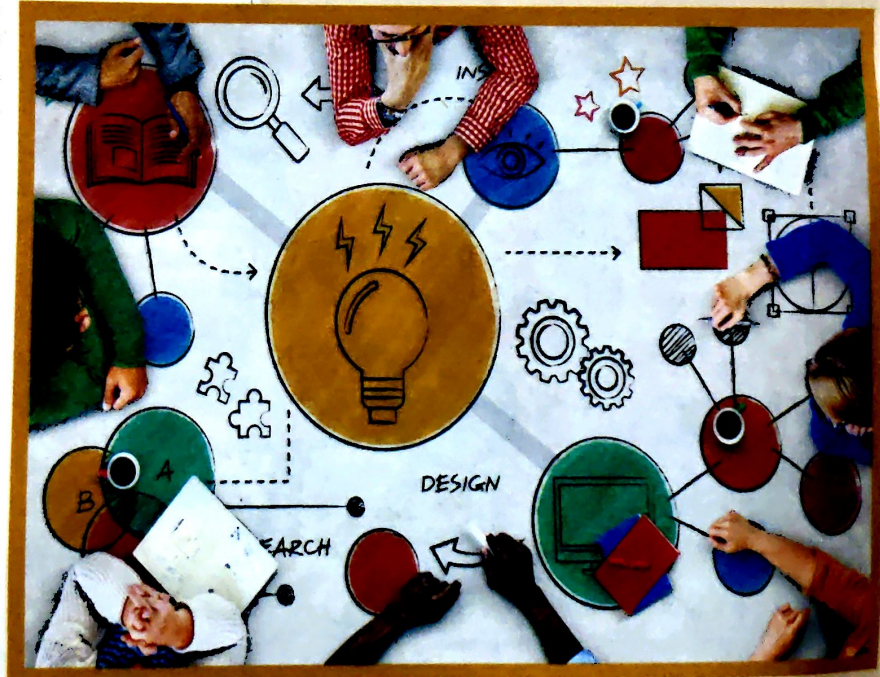
various steps in research due to lack of strict adherence to timetable causes disorganization and an unscientific way of communicating facts. Weak research

methodology and a lack of carefully done research analysis cause the inability of research scholars to genuinely contribute to existing knowledge. Thus, the research framework and proper timeline must be reviewed by relevant stakeholders to engage students in research activities at the beginning of the research project. During the second and third years, scholars should receive constructive feedback from concerned researchers during their three research seminars in a systematic way to improve the quality of research. University administrations across Pakistan need to improve the linkage with foreign universities for the process of transparent and effective thesis evaluation.



tion in the final year of doctoral degrees. Unnecessary formalities in organizing seminars and thesis evaluations must be avoided. Trust-building is an important factor in working relationships between supervisors and supervisees. Campus research culture at various universities in Pakistan must be explored to understand the dynamics of changing relationships between the two important stakeholders and to make strategies about how to improve deteriorating relations by promoting professionalism and ethical values at the workplace. The lack of trust creates a sense of vulnerability among students, causing demotivation and frustration. Further, the absence of trust deepens the gap in the expectations between research students and their mentors. The supervisor needs to guide the scholar to publish research output to fulfil the requirement for the award of a PhD degree. Further, the lead supervisor needs to come forward to resolve the clash of interests and ideas between the supervisor and co-supervisors to avoid consequences for research scholars. Good supervision practice is based on a professional way of dealing with such issues by developing an action plan based on reviewing and reflecting on the actual situation and using the familiar approach differently or adopting new techniques in a familiar way to explicitly deal with complex problems. For the recognition of new knowledge, one has to publish research papers in high-repute journals. The "publish or perish" culture is common in American universities; in fact, it has resulted in an increase in publications in recent years. You can call it the cobra effect, which means that research centres are now "cobra breeding hatcheries." This is also a capitalist spirit where every commodity is used for the personal good or institutional good. This problem was also brought to light by many researchers in the past, but no practical steps to discourage it were taken. There are various cases of misreporting, data manipulation and plagiarism which were pointed out by various scientists/educationists in Pakistan. It is observed that websites on the internet are blatantly offering their services to solve problems and write assignments

and theses for money. Some even contact you to put your name in the research paper. Pakistan is no exception. Here situation is becoming worse because of the culture of putting names as co-authors for different reasons. This has now become a profitable business for authors. The paper mill industry becomes important with the initiation of open-access journals. The increase in the number of publications brings a lot of benefits; an increase in the ranking of institutions and authors' promotions, power and authority. In this paper mill industry, faculty and institutions are somehow involved. That is why institutions are not pointing out the issue; rather, they sweep it under the carpet. There are pressure groups in Pakistani universities who are responsible for writing theses of PhD/MPhil for some benefits that are known to authorities.



It is the need of the hour that all stakeholders sit together to discuss these serious problems and come up with innovative solutions. For example, modern research techniques are becoming more important; they should be taught to young and aspiring researchers. Research training institutes have become a basic need. The importance of research should be taught to students right from the BS level, a mandatory research subject should be introduced for that matter. There should be some sort of incentive and funding for researchers to encourage and support them. ■

The writer is PhD English (Literature).
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DOMESTIC ISSUES SPECIAL

Domestic Violence in Pakistan

Pakistani women desperately look for solutions

Pakistan prides itself on being a free country, but for many women, true freedom remains an elusive dream. Beneath the façade of happy families lies a grim reality: the relentless cycle of domestic violence that women and children endure behind closed doors. Domestic violence in Pakistan is not just a social issue; it is a systemic crisis that continues to destroy lives and futures. Despite women increasingly joining the workforce and gaining financial independence, the abuse persists. The government's response to this crisis has been woefully inadequate. Initiatives like the domestic abuse centers offered a glimmer of hope, but the lack of continuity not only undermines the credibility of government programs but also leaves victims without the support they desperately need.

Zara Waseem Bhatti

Women's rights in Pakistan have been a focal point of national and international discourse for decades. Despite significant legislative advancements, domestic violence is still a pervasive issue in many Pakistani households. Almost every day, the newspapers are rife with reports about how women are being used and abused by their spouses or male members of their family. This vice is endemic principally because women in our society remain at the mercy of men. Patriarchy has done more harm to them than any physical or mental disorder. In fact, patriarchy is the root cause of all other illnesses that significantly impact a woman's life. Men in Pakistan generally believe that violence is the only way to assert control and manage the family. Women are expected to accept their fate, keep their mouths shut and endure violence in the hope of making their marriages work. Consequently, the cycle of trauma continues, affecting the next generation.

The state of affairs

Pakistan has a troubling history with domestic violence, with various forms of abuse being widespread. Reports indicate that nearly one in three married women in Pakistan report facing physical violence from their husbands.

An Asian Development Bank report last year termed domestic violence "a silent pandemic" that poses a serious challenge to society and the state.

According to a Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) report, over 90 percent of women in Pakistan

had faced domestic violence in their lifetime, by the year 2020.

According to the Sustainable Social Development Organisation (SSDO), a total of 17,527 cases were reported in 2023, a stark increase from 14,793 in 2022. In Punjab, 10,201 cases of violence were recorded against PPC 354 and PPC 509. Among all districts, Lahore was a hotspot of violent crime against women, accounting for 1,464 cases, followed by Sheikhpura (1,198) and Kasur (877). Likewise, the number of rape cases in the province of Punjab was also a cause for concern, as a total of 6,624 cases were reported across the province in 2023, which meant that approximately after every 45 minutes, a woman was raped. Faisalabad emerged as a hotspot district with 728 cases, followed closely by Lahore (721) and Sargodha (398).

Other rampant crimes against women in Punjab included kidnapping and honour killing. A total of 562 women were kidnapped in Punjab in 2023, with Lahore (136), Faisalabad (30) and Vehari (26) as hotspots. Moreover, 120 cases of honour killing were also reported, with Rahim Yar Khan (9), Jhang (8) and Rajanpur (8) as hotspots. Finally, 20 cases of traffick-

ing in persons were also reported, with 19 of them from Chiniot.

In the province of Sindh, 2,125 cases of violence against women were reported in 2023, compared to 2,184 in 2022. A total of 1,349 women were abducted across the province, which meant that approximately 26 women were kidnapped almost every week. Similarly, 346 cases of domestic violence and 200 cases of sexual abuse were also reported, as well as 136 cases of honour killing. The number of cases of domestic violence was almost at par with the number of cases in 2022, both the number of sexual abuse and honour killing cases were substantially higher. In addition, 94 cases of workplace harassment were also reported in 2023.

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence refers to physical, sexual or emotional abuse and controlling behaviours, usually by a current or former partner, but also by a family member or carer.

The ICT Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill 2020 broadly defines domestic violence as physical, sexual, economic, emotional and psychological abuse.

According to Punjab's Protection of Women Against Violence Act of 2016, domestic violence means the violence committed by the defendant with whom the aggrieved person is living or has lived in a house or visits the house when they are related to each other by consanguinity, marriage, adoption or in terms of employment.

As per the Sindh's Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2013, "Domestic Violence includes but is not limited to, all acts of gender-based and other physical or psychological abuse committed by a respondent against women, children or other vulnerable persons, with whom the respondent is or has been in a domestic relationship..."

Causes

Our societal and cultural makeup, which often views women through a highly misogynistic and regressive lens, ends up contributing to a situation where women routinely become victims of violence within their homes. Too many in the country may not even view domestic violence as a problem, which also means that victims may not be aware of their rights and may even see themselves to be at fault.

A recent report by the Human Rights Commission of

Pakistan (2023) has revealed that social, cultural, religious and political factors enable and proliferate domestic violence in one way or the other. First, the patriarchal culture enshrines that women are the property of men and they have unlimited control over their bodies and minds. The patients of the patriarchy are on steroids of control and authority. They snub women at home, at their places of work and in colleges and universities in their different capacities.

The financial dependence of the women also contributes to domestic violence. The participation of women in the workforce is limited. According to findings of the

International Labour Organization (2023), women constitute a mere 21% of the workforce. Out-of-work women are dependent on their husbands and fathers. They are a mere liability for their families. It also makes them the easy target of harassment, violence and other forms of pain.

In a similar context, social stigma and shame attached to the reporting of cases of domestic violence also assist the criminals in perpetuating violence. Women are considered the custodians of family prestige and value. It is unacceptable for them to report violence, despite the fact that they suffer cruelty in one way or the other.

Institutional hurdles also hamper reporting and disposing of cases related to domestic violence. The investigation and prosecution are either slow or complacent in such cases. Complaints related to domestic violence are mostly not registered. Local and traditional remedies are offered by police to sort out these issues. The

Legal Aid Society (LAS) has compiled data, which is a stark reminder of institutional failure. It takes more than 1.3 months to register FIR in cases of domestic violence. Similarly, the average time of submission of challan by police is 4.6 months and trial prolongs, on average, for 10 months. In all this, victims learn very well: never complain and bear the pain.

The toothless laws

The laws designed to protect women from such abuse often fall short in preventing the tragic outcomes that have become all too common. These are not isolated incidents but a part of a broader issue of gender-based violence that continues to be a pressing concern

DOMESTIC ISSUES SPECIAL

in the country.

The most prominent law in this regard is the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act. It was enacted in various forms across the provinces. The law aims to provide immediate protection to victims of domestic violence, which it defines broadly to include physical, emotional, psychological and economic abuse. The law mandates the establishment of protection committees and shelters and grants courts the authority to issue protection orders, residence orders and monetary relief for victims.

Another relevant law is the Pakistan Penal Code. It includes several provisions that can be applied to cases of domestic violence. Sections 299 to 338 of the PPC deal with various forms of physical harm, including assault and grievous bodily harm. Section 506, which pertains to criminal intimidation, can be particularly relevant in cases of domestic abuse where threats and coercion are involved. The Anti-Women Practices Act of 2011 also targets harmful cultural practices such as forced marriage and the so-called honour killings, providing additional legal recourse for women facing domestic abuse.

The Domestic Violence Act and other related laws recognize the multifaceted nature of abuse and aim to provide a robust framework for both immediate protection and long-term relief. Their provisions for protection orders are particularly significant, as courts can prohibit the abuser from contacting the victim, ensure the victim's right to remain in the home and mandate

financial support from the abuser. These measures are designed to provide victims with a sense of security and the means to rebuild their lives free from violence. However, the effectiveness of these laws in preventing domestic violence and abuse is contingent upon their implementation.

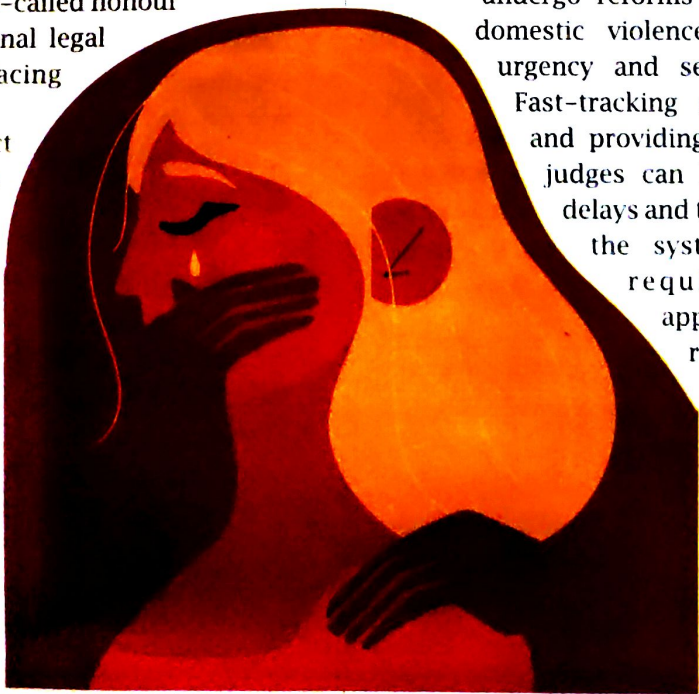
Conclusion

Addressing the issue of domestic violence in Pakistan requires more than just vigorous laws, it also requires a holistic approach that includes societal

What Affects Women Empowerment?

Despite various reform initiatives and advocacy platforms, the socio-economic situation of women in Pakistan has not improved. The process of empowerment has either been affected by social limitations or taboos that still persist. These social limitations and taboos are deeply rooted in societal norms. Therefore, the situation demands mass awareness and mindset change to address the issue of women's empowerment. For instance, the concept of family honour is often linked to the behaviour, movement and reputation of women. This places immense pressure on women to conform to restrictive social norms, limiting their freedom to make personal choices and take decisions. These social limitations and taboos require a multifaceted approach, including education, legal reforms and the active involvement of both men and women. It will not only eliminate these socio-cultural barriers, but it will also develop an environment where women can thrive and contribute fully for the well-being of society.

change, improved law enforcement and judicial reform. Public awareness campaigns are crucial in shifting cultural attitudes towards domestic violence. These campaigns can educate the public about the rights of victims and the legal avenues available to them, thereby encouraging more victims to come forward. Law-enforcement agencies need comprehensive training programs that sensitize officers to the complexities of domestic violence and equip them with the skills to handle such cases effectively. The judiciary must also undergo reforms to ensure that cases of domestic violence are treated with the urgency and seriousness they deserve. Fast-tracking domestic violence cases and providing specialized training for judges can help avoid some of the delays and the bias currently plaguing the system. Bridging this gap requires a multifaceted approach that combines legal reform with societal change, ensuring that the promise of protection and justice becomes a reality for all victims of domestic violence. ■



The writer is a CSS aspirant, having an Msc in Gender Studies.

THE CRISIS OF EDUCATION

Different types of low

Dr. Zahra Naheed

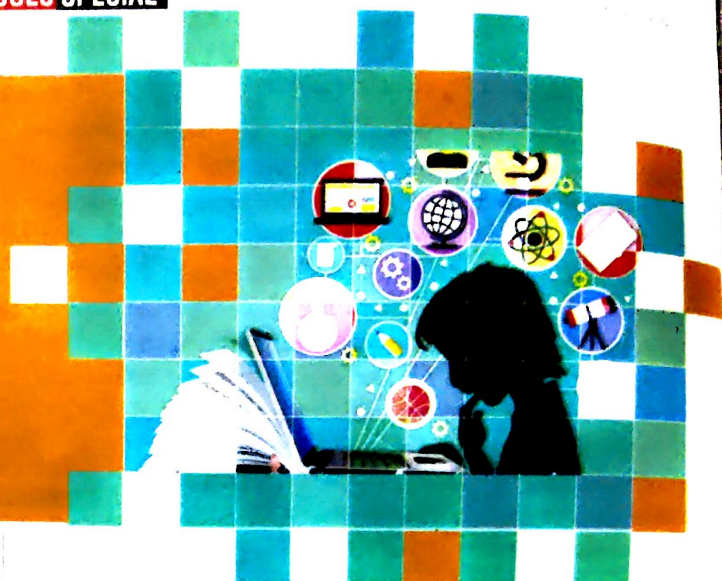
On August 23, the Planning Commission of Pakistan released its groundbreaking report – developed in collaboration with international experts and government agencies – that exposes the declining quality of education in Pakistan. The country's national average score on the Index is 53.46, meaning thereby that the country is in the "low" performance category. Among the five domains, infrastructure and access scored the highest at 58.95, indicating some progress in expanding educational opportunities. Inclusion (equity and technology) follows as the second-highest domain.

The report said public financing recorded the lowest score, highlighting the need for increased and better-targeted spending in the education sector. The learning domain also scores poorly, reflecting persistently low learning outcomes among students.

About DEPIx

The DEPIx is a comprehensive tool designed to measure and evaluate the performance of education systems in 134 districts across Pakistan. It is structured into five key domains: Governance & Management, Learning, Inclusion (Equity & Technology), Infrastructure & Access, and Public Financing. Each domain encompasses specific parameters and indicators that collectively provide a detailed assessment of educational performance.

Covering 134 districts, including Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and all districts in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Punjab, and Sindh, DEPIx classifies districts into four categories: Very High, High, Medium and Low. The report primarily covers the period from



Highlighting Pakistan's educational plight, the recently released District Education Performance Index (DEPIx) 2020-23, developed by the Planning Commission, has revealed striking disparities in education performance across Pakistan's provinces and districts. The groundbreaking report shows that the national average score for the overall index is 53.46 (out of a 100), which places Pakistan in the "Low" performance category. Around 58 percent of the country's districts fall in the medium category and remaining in the under-performing.

2020-23.

Key Highlights

- ★ The national average score for the overall index is 53.46 (out of a 100).
- ★ Among the provinces, Punjab emerged as the top performer with a composite score of 61.39. KP follows with an average score of 54.47, while Sindh and Balochistan lag behind with scores of 51.55 and 45.50, respectively.
- ★ More than half of the districts in Pakistan (77) are categorized as "Low" in education performance. This group collectively accounts for about 25.6 million children (approximately 36% of the country's school-age population).
- ★ The majority of these low-performing districts are concentrated in Balochistan (33) and Sindh (22), underscoring substantial inter-provincial disparities.
- ★ Two-fifths (56) of Pakistan's districts are classified in the "Medium" category, with scores ranging between 55 and 70.

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- ★ These districts are spread across Punjab, KP and Sindh. Punjab leads with the highest number of districts in this category, totalling 32, followed by KP with 16 districts and Sindh with 8.
- ★ With the exception of ICT, the 10 highest-scored districts in Pakistan are exclusively from Punjab and KP, with 7 of these from Punjab and 2 from KP. Notably, no districts from Sindh and Balochistan are represented among the highest-scored 10 districts.
- ★ The strong performance in the top-ranked 10 districts can largely be attributed to high scores in the Infrastructure & Access domain, averaging at 82.43, followed by the Inclusion (Equity & Technology) domain at an average of 78.29.
- ★ Conversely, even the country's highest-scoring districts struggle in the Public Financing domain, with only 3 out of the 10 exceeding a score of 50 on this domain, and the overall average score for the top 10 districts at 47.48.
- ★ Out of the 134 districts covered in this report, none could achieve the "Very High" performance category.
- ★ Particularly concerning is the fact that all districts of Balochistan fall into the "Low" category.
- ★ Public financing also shows the second-widest variation (18.10 points) among the highest performing districts, ranging from ICT's 55.97 to Rawalpindi's 37.87.
- ★ In the Learning domain, only Rawalpindi and ICT score above 60, and the average across all 10 districts is only 56.66.
- ★ The lowest-scoring 10 districts paint a stark contrast, with Balochistan disproportionately represented, accounting for 6 of these districts. Sindh and KP each contribute two districts to this group.
- ★ Infrastructure & Access, a strength for the top-ranked districts, emerges as the most significant weakness for the lowest-scored ones. With an average score of 36.39 in this domain, all these districts, with the exception of Chagai, perform worse on Infrastructure & Access than their overall index score.
- ★ Meanwhile, Governance & Management emerges as the domain with the highest average across the

lowest-scored districts, coming out at 48.36 compared to the national average of 56.18 for this domain.

The Crisis

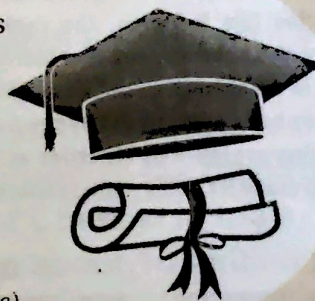
With Pakistan dedicating just 1.9% of its GDP to education, the budgetary commitment to the sector is clear. However, simply increasing resources is not a complete solution. A lot more needs to be done. There are approximately 26.2 million children out of school in the country. Among those who are in school, many receive a subpar quality of education. Access to quality education is largely determined by parental income: higher income allows parents to afford better educational opportunities for their children, while those with lower income either face challenges in enrolling their children in school or must settle for government or low-fee private schools, which often deliver inadequate education. We need to increase the number of schools, teachers and classrooms;

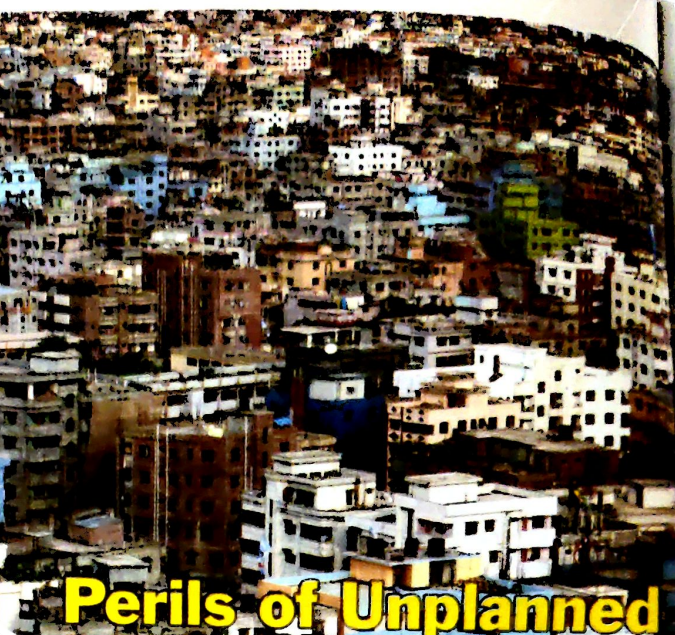
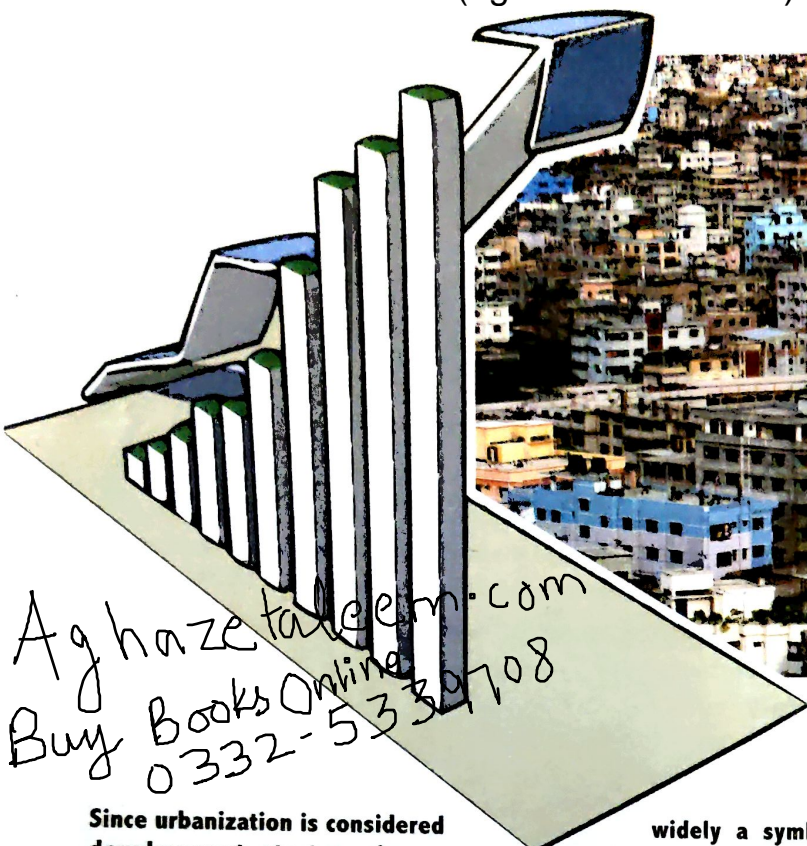
overhaul our assessment and examination systems; update our curricula and textbooks; enhance the teaching skills and content knowledge of educators; and improve governance structures in the public sector.

Conclusion

As such, the report is the further affirmation of what many already know: education is inadequate throughout Pakistan and only the very privileged can afford a proper education in this country. This likely explains why the home of the nation's top officials is the only district that appears to be doing well. However, though the majority of the country might be pretty uniform in terms of education outcomes, this does not suggest uniformity when it comes to the causes of failure. Inter-provincial and inter-district differences in terms of problems and shortcomings should not be dismissed in favour of a centralized approach to education that many still favour. Different provinces have different strengths and weaknesses and a decentralized approach would be most conducive to improving overall performance. Education in this country is fundamentally overfunded and diverse. The former can be changed, given the will to do so, and the latter ought not to be suppressed. ■

The writer is a lecturer at a private-sector university.





Perils of Unplanned Urbanization

Rethinking the future of our cities

Since urbanization is considered development strategy in many improved living standards. However, in countries like Pakistan, the rapid pace of urbanization and the resulting urban sprawl present significant challenges, particularly given the already considerable urban-rural divide. In our country, the existing urban development approach is failing, resulting in deteriorating public services, declining quality of life and reduced economic productivity in urban areas. This is exactly what has been pointed out by the Asian Development Bank, which, in its latest report, has said that Pakistan's soaring population is piling pressure on its cities as its macroeconomic position remains uncertain. It also proposes a new model of urbanization to help make its cities more resilient and liveable.

Muhammad Sheraz



Amid the possibility of flooding in major urban centres in the wake of heavy rains, the Asian Development Bank in its recent report "Pakistan National Urban Assessment," has revealed that Pakistan's population and urbanization challenges are increasing, necessitating a new urbanization model, as failing public services, declining quality of life, and decreasing economic productivity undermine urban agglomerations's socio-economic benefits. The report points out that the current urban development model perpetuates these challenges and needs to be replaced with a sustainable urbanization model.

What is the proposed model?

The ADB has said that this new urbanization model should seek to internalize the economic, environmental and social benefits associated with higher levels of agglomeration; be fuelled by robust planning and evaluation capacities that extend vertically and horizontally, as well as spatially and temporally; and be steered by proactive institutions that underwrite the social and economic well-being of urban citizens

with the public services and infrastructure necessary to sustain growth without detrimental social and environmental consequences. Moreover, forward-looking urban planning needs to integrate solutions to the known challenges of urbanization, which requires a multi-sectoral planning approach that fosters the allocation of land, capital and labour across conventional boundaries to maximize the social, environmental and economic returns for all. It also requires the progressive reinterpretation of urban spaces to reduce the negative externalities of one sector on another, such as housing, energy, transport, water, health, education, recreation, social services and the environment. Such a holistic planning approach will enable cities to develop synergies and complementarities across sectors to capture the most benefits for all. Furthermore, the appropriate deployment of urban units with multi-sectoral technical competency can continue to facilitate this shift to an integrated urban planning approach. The ADB further suggests that urban planning should

channel the increasing value of land toward providing public services. Coupled with efforts to distribute service costs to beneficiaries through user fees, increasing public revenues from urban land development should lead to the continued enhancement and expansion of services and an incremental increase in revenue sources.

Linking service liabilities to the investments made by urban service providers and mandating social and environmental provisions in property developments should gradually ease ongoing budget pressures on local governments.

Land allocations and development approvals need to be progressively redefined to enable public infrastructure to guide planned urbanization rather than chase messy urbanization. This can build on existing local government laws, empowering local governments to approve land use plans and exercise control over development proposals.

Highlights of the report

Following are some key highlights of the report:

- Pakistan's population growth averaged 2.55% annually in 2017-2023. This brought Pakistan's total population in 2023 to 241.5 million (16.3% more than in 2017), with an urban population of 93.8 million (approaching a four-fold increase since 1981). Recent projections place the country's population at over 400 million by 2050.
- The pressure on cities mired in ever-increasing deficits in urban infrastructure and services will intensify, with urban population projected to climb to 99.4 million, or 40.7% of the country's total, in 2030.
- Since the 1981 census, Pakistan has defined urban and rural areas based on administrative boundaries, ignoring expansions and fast-growing peri-urban areas. This has resulted in a continued underestimation of the urban population.
- As Pakistan's urbanization escalated, so has the trend toward the concentration of the urban population in the larger urban centers. By 2017, 54% of the country's urban dwellers lived in just 21 major urban localities with populations exceeding 500,000, with 34.5% of them in the megacities of Karachi and Lahore. In each of the provinces, the capital cities hold a disproportionately large share of the provincial urban population, concentrating both the political and administrative pressures of urbanization.
- In 2018, the cities generated 55% of the



All of Punjab, with a population of over 100 million, collects less urban property tax than the city of Chennai in India, home to about 10 million people

country's GDP, with the 10 major cities accounting for 95% of the federal tax revenue. Karachi alone contributed 12%-15% of the national GDP and 55% of the federal tax revenue in 2018.

- In 2010, the 18th Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan mandated the devolution of powers from the federal to the provincial governments and required the provinces to further devolve fiscal, political and administrative authority to the local governments through Article 140-A. Partial implementation of provincial local government acts (LGAs) has given rise to a complex urban governance model, characterized by the involvement of multiple stakeholders in urban planning, land management and municipal services, with unclear mandates, overlapping functions and competing interests.

- Military lands and cantonments do not fall under the jurisdiction of city administrations but are administered by the Military Lands & Cantonments Group, a department attached to the Ministry of Defence. The group oversees the governance of

44 cantonments through local cantonment boards and manages the Ministry of Defence land throughout the country through 11 military estate circles. In contrast to municipal areas, bylaws and regulations are strictly enforced in cantonment areas with almost no encroachment

on privately-owned lands under their development.

- The increasing imperviousness of urban surfaces due to a loss of green cover and the soil sealing that comes with massive construction works and infrastructure development in cities is a major factor behind urban flooding. Lahore provides a good example. It became more prone to flooding after it lost more green cover in just 7 years (2010-2017) than it did in the previous two decades. Urban flooding is exacerbated by the ageing and overburdened drainage systems, lack of rainwater storage and management systems, inadequate waste disposal systems, institutional capacity constraints, weak urban governance and development that ignore topography and landscape.
- Air pollution alone shortens the average Pakistani's life expectancy by 4.3 years and imposes an additional loss of 6.5% of GDP per year due to mortality and years lived with disability.
- Pakistan's high exposure to climate-related hazards, such as floods, droughts and cyclones, and

its lack of coping capacity will make it continually vulnerable to climate disaster risks. Therefore, mainstreaming climate mitigation and adaptation measures in development is not an option but an imperative. With urban areas especially vulnerable and likely to bear the brunt of climate change impacts, urban focal agencies and planners need to be proactive and lose no time in adopting climate resiliency principles and approaches in development planning and management.

The housing crisis

Urban housing has failed to keep pace with rapid urban population growth. The housing shortage, estimated to have approached 10 million housing units in 2018, has forced around 57% of the urban population to live in slums or Kutchi Abadis (informal settlements), usually under harsh and unhygienic conditions. No recent update is available on Pakistan's urban housing deficit, but the World Bank has reported a 1% decline in the proportion of the urban population living in slums from 2018 to 2020.

Government pronouncements to meet the escalating housing deficit have not translated into practice in the face of the realpolitik of the vested interests at play. For instance, government agencies that control nearly 90% of the public land in Karachi have been reluctant to release even a portion of that land for affordable housing development. With a monthly mortgage repayment of Rs 20,000 (roughly \$70 in December 2023), the Naya Pakistan Housing Program launched by the federal government in 2020 is clearly not targeting low-income groups. By mid-2023, the program had completed only 53,000 housing units (with another 28,000 under construction), well short of the target to provide 5 million housing units to those currently not owning an independent residential unit in Pakistan.

As the urban population continues to swell, the country's housing shortage will be hard to address without public-private partnerships (PPPs) that target the more affordable end of the housing market (including vertical housing developments). The PPP Unit of the Government of Sindh has initiated some housing sector interventions but has yet to make an impact.

As the role of the government shifts from being an executor to an enabler and facilitator of private housing development for poor people, the report concluded that the need to establish a legal and regulatory framework to contain the market pressure

to serve the interests of non-poor people would remain a key challenge.

Conclusion

The urgent need for a new urbanization model in Pakistan cannot be overlooked. The existing urban development approach is failing, resulting in deteriorating public services, declining quality of life and reduced economic productivity in urban areas. It is clear that a fundamental shift towards sustainable urbanization is imperative. The new urbanization model must prioritize internalization of economic, environmental and social benefits through robust planning and evaluation, rather than the free for all that takes place even in 'planned cities' such as Islamabad. It is imperative to incentivize investment in inner-city regeneration projects, affordable housing initiatives and development of public and community spaces. Bridging the housing deficit has been a big political talking point, but the actual



Despite contributing 12-15% of Pakistan's GDP, Karachi has major infrastructure and service problems. The report notes that government agencies are reluctant to use public land for affordable housing, making these issues worse

solutions presented by recent governments have been borderline disastrous. A holistic, multi-sectoral planning approach is necessary to maximize the social, environmental and economic returns for all stakeholders. This includes

re-evaluating the allocation of land, capital and labour to create working cities which have accessible employment and entertainment opportunities, markets and commercial areas and are also pedestrian- and public transport-friendly. Sustainable urbanization will not be easy, but it is the only viable option to turn Pakistan's cities into economically viable, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable urban centres. ■

The writer is a member of staff.

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The KASHMIR Conflict

Existing options for a solution

Osman Khan



Kashmir has been a cauldron of discontent since the partition of the Indian Subcontinent into India and Pakistan. Dispute over Kashmir's status has been a central driver of conflict between these two states in the decades since, with levels of violence inside Kashmir mirroring fluctuations in the bilateral relationship. Although the people of Kashmir were assured by the international community, represented by the United Nations, that they would be able to decide their future by a free vote, this assurance has not been honoured yet. Since 1948, the UN Security Council has remained seized of the Kashmir dispute under the Agenda item "India-Pakistan Question" and passed over a dozen resolutions, but to no avail.

Background

When Great Britain was liquidating its empire in the Subcontinent, it partitioned British India into two independent countries, i.e. India and Pakistan. This settlement also meant the end of British paramountcy over the autonomous principalities, called Princely States. These were supposed either to merge with one of the two countries in accordance with the wishes of the people and the principle of partition or to remain independent. Kashmir was a predominantly Muslim-majority state. Besides, it was far more contiguous with Pakistan than with India. It was, therefore, expected either to accede to Pakistan or to remain independent. But the Maharaja (ruler) was Hindu and he rejected the first option and could not manage the second.

Faced with the insurgency of his people, joined by a

Since the partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947, both Pakistan and India have been locked in a near-constant conflict over the region of Kashmir. Several wars have been fought between the two states over this region. Besides, there has been an ever-present freedom struggle within the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). In the past, however, there has been, on several occasions, a serious level of dialogue between India and Pakistan over the future of Kashmir, which led to numerous proposals about the future status of the valley, with three scenarios forming the bulk of these proposals: full independence for Kashmir, various forms of formal partition between India and Pakistan and maximum autonomy for both Kashmirs in an either unified or divided state. Notwithstanding these options, the Kashmir is still a flashpoint and it could lead to a war between the two nuclear-armed nations. In the following write-up, the author has enumerated some formulas that have been floated from time to time to resolve this long-standing dispute.

few hundred civilian volunteers from Pakistan, the Maharaja fled the capital, Srinagar, on October 25, 1947, and arranged that India send its army to help him crush the rebellion. India, coveting the territory, set one condition on its armed intervention: the Maharaja must sign an Instrument of Accession to India, to which he agreed. However, India did not wait for his signature and flew its troops into the State. An eminent British historian, Alastair Lamb, convincingly

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suggests that the document is fraudulent. Though long planned and swiftly executed, the annexation of Kashmir could not be a simple affair for India. By ostensibly preserving the principle that in cases of conflict between the rulers and their people's wishes, the latter must prevail; India attached a condition to the transaction with the Maharaja: the accession was made subject to reference to the people. The stipulations were echoed by icons of India's politics. M.K. Gandhi amplified on October 30, 1947, that "[Kashmir's] accession [to India] was provisional upon an impartial plebiscite

being taken by Kashmiris." Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, India's celebrated first prime minister, declared on January 2, 1952: "We have taken the issue to the United Nations and given our word of honour. We have left the question of a final solution to the people of Kashmir." Nehru also said,

"We have declared the fate of Kashmir is ultimately to be decided by the people. That pledge we have given not only to the people of Kashmir but to the world. We will not and cannot back out of it."

Kashmir question at the United Nations

The right to self-determination of people is a basic principle of the United Nations Charter that has been reaffirmed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and applied countless times to the settlement of many international disputes. The applicability of the principle to the specific case of Kashmir has been explicitly recognized by the United Nations. It was upheld equally by India and Pakistan when the Kashmir dispute was brought before the Security Council. With the establishment of India and Pakistan as sovereign states, Jammu and Kashmir was not part of the territory of either. The two countries entered into an agreement to allow its people to exercise their right to self-determination under impartial auspices and in conditions free

from coercion from either side. The agreement is embodied in the two resolutions of the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) explicitly accepted by both governments.

These are not resolutions in the routine sense of the term. Their provisions were negotiated in detail by the Commission with India and Pakistan and it was only after the consent of both governments was explicitly obtained that they were endorsed by the Security Council. They, thus, constitute a binding and solemn

international agreement about the settlement of the Kashmir dispute.

Why is the Kashmir dispute important?

There are certain characteristics of the situation in Kashmir that distinguish it



from all other deplorable human rights situations around the world.

i. It continues to prevail in

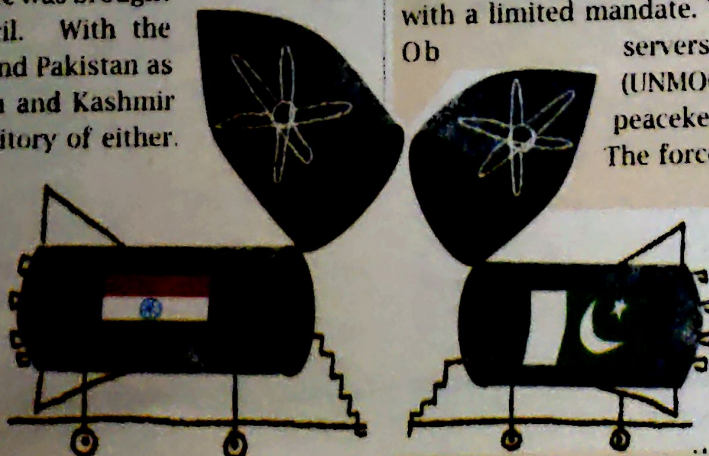
what is recognized under international law as a disputed territory.

ii. It represents a government's repression, not of a secessionist or separatist movement but of an uprising against foreign occupation: an occupation that was expected to end under a determination made by the United Nations. The Kashmiris are not and cannot be called separatists because they cannot secede from a country to which they never acceded in the first place.

iii. It is a paradoxical case of the United Nations being deactivated and rendered unable to address a situation to which it had devoted a number of resolutions and in which it had established a presence, though with a limited mandate. The United Nations Military Ob

servers Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) is one of the oldest peacekeeping operations of the UN. The force is stationed in Kashmir to observe the cease-fire between India and Pakistan.

iv. The Indian delegate at the Security Council, N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar, said on January 15, 1947, that "the question of the



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future status of Kashmir, whether she should withdraw from her accession to India, and either accede to Pakistan or remain independent, with a right to claim admission as a Member of the United Nations – all this we have recognized to be a matter for unfettered decision by the people of Kashmir, after normal life is restored to them."

Possible solutions

Three basic options for a solution to the Kashmir dispute exist in keeping with the positions of the three parties to the dispute. Several other options have also been suggested by various experts over the years. It would be instructive to examine the major proposals and the reactions of the parties concerned.

1. Plebiscite/Self-determination

Pakistan advocates a plebiscite under UN resolutions that would enable the Kashmiri people to choose between accession to either Pakistan or India. Pakistan remains confident that the majority of the Kashmiris would choose to join Pakistan. It rejects the contention that the UN resolutions have become obsolete and argues that only another UN resolution can amend or annul these resolutions. The plebiscite option has remained completely unacceptable to India since it realizes that it would lose such a referendum.

The Kashmiri people support a UN-sponsored plebiscite, but some groups, such as the Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), want the inclusion of the option of independence. A proposal for "joint control" has also been put forward for consideration by all these parties by President Musharraf.

2. Status Quo

While India maintains the maximalist position that the whole of Jammu and Kashmir is its integral part, including Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas (now Gilgit-Baltistan), it has indicated its willingness to accept the status quo or the Line of Control (LoC) as a "compromise" solution. This was India's objective at the Simla Conference and continues to be its implied bottom line.

Obviously, this option is unacceptable to Pakistan and the majority of Kashmiris on both sides of the LoC.

3. The Third Option

Independence for Kashmir, usually called the "third option," is advocated by a section of the Kashmiri people, mainly the urban population, who support the JKLF. Whether this group is in the majority or not can only be determined if and when the Kashmiris are able to exercise their choice.

So far, both Pakistan and India, for their own reasons, reject this option.

4. Chenab Formula

According to this formula, the Muslim-majority areas comprising the Kashmir Valley and three Muslim-dominated districts of Jammu (Poonch, Rajouri and Doda) falling on the right bank of the Chenab River would join Pakistan, and the rest of occupied Kashmir would go to India. This solution was superficially discussed during the 1962–63 Bhutto–Sawaran Singh talks but was not followed through by the Indians.

Later, in 1999, it was also discussed between former Foreign Secretary Niaz Naik and his Indian interlocutor R.K. Mishra, both of whom had been authorized by their respective governments to unofficially explore solutions for Kashmir. However, nothing came of their talks and this could have been only an exploratory ploy by the Indians.

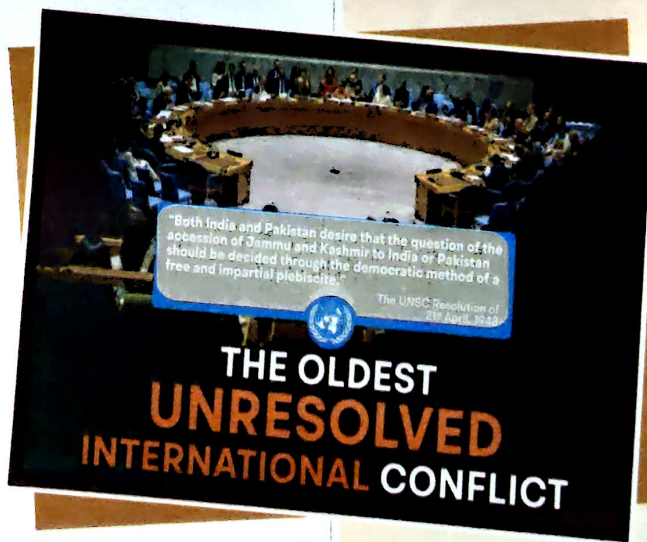
Pakistan and the Kashmiris could live with such a settlement, but it is

highly unlikely that the Indians would accept it in the present circumstances.

5. Owen Dixon Plan

Owen Dixon was an Australian jurist who had been entrusted by the UN in 1950 to explore ways to resolve the dispute. After extensively visiting the region, Dixon proposed a regional approach for the areas where the people's preference for India or Pakistan was not clear, i.e. the Kashmir valley; and present-day Azad Kashmir, whose status would be negotiated and resolved through reference to the people. As for the other areas, Jammu and Ladakh would go to India, while the Northern Areas would become part of Pakistan.

Pakistan could have gone along with such a regional approach, but India did not take a clear position initially and later rejected this proposal.



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6. Kashmir Study Group Proposal

In 1998, a US-based Kashmiri tycoon, Farooq Kathwari, funded a think tank called the Kashmir Study Group composed of South Asian experts from the region and the United States. The group put forward several variations based on the idea of a "United Sovereign Entity" which envisages the Kashmir valley to be reconstituted through an internationally supervised ballot as a sovereign entity but without an international status, having free access to and from both India and Pakistan. Later, this proposal was enlarged to include Azad Kashmir in such an entity. So far, neither Pakistan nor India have endorsed this proposal.

7. UN Trusteeship Proposal

Under this proposal, made by Dr. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, a Pakistani academic, the areas of Jammu and Ladakh would join India while the Northern Areas and Azad Kashmir would become a part of Pakistan, leaving the Kashmir valley to be put under UN Trusteeship for 10 years, following which a referendum would be held to determine whether the people want to join Pakistan or India or become independent. So far, neither country has endorsed this approach and it is unlikely that they will in the present conditions.

So far, neither country has endorsed this approach and it is unlikely that they will in the present conditions.

8. Yousaf Buch Formula

A former Pakistani and UN official of Kashmiri descent, Yousaf Buch, put forth a two-phased approach in which the first phase would be devoted to ending the violence in Kashmir by declaring a ceasefire within Kashmir and on the LoC; and in the second phase, the UN would demarcate five cantons or divisions along the lines of the undivided state of Jammu and Kashmir where elections would be held to Provisional Assemblies. Each Assembly would vote on whether it wished to continue with the existing relationship with either Pakistan or India or to negotiate a new relationship with either or both which would then be put to a

referendum in that canton.

This idea has not found favour with either Pakistan or India. In any case, it is too complicated an approach.

9. The Trieste and Tyrol Models

These ideas have been put forward by an American academic, Selig Harrison, who uses the model of the autonomous region of Trieste between Italy and former Yugoslavia, where the people of Slav origin live under Italian sovereignty but enjoy freedom to protect their culture and ethnicity as well as travel between the two sides. Harrison proposed that India should give special status to the Kashmir valley as an autonomous region while Pakistan would do the same in Azad Kashmir so that both sides of Kashmir would get equal autonomy.

The LoC would become a "soft" border, allowing people on both sides to move freely across.

A similar arrangement existing between Italy and Austria in the German-speaking area of Tyrol in Italy with maximum autonomy and free movement across the border with Austria has also been suggested by some experts.

Neither Pakistan nor India or the Kashmiris have expressed any interest in these ideas.

10. The Andorra Solution

Andorra, like Kashmir, is a small princely state situated on the border of Spain and France which had been claimed by both sides since 803. In 1993, the two countries agreed to give Andorra an independent constitution with jointly guaranteed autonomy.

According to this idea, Kashmir should be similarly given a special autonomous status by Pakistan and India.

Conclusion

The Kashmir question is one of the oldest unresolved international problems in the world. The experience of the last almost eight decades has shown that it will not go away and that an effort is urgently required to resolve it on a durable basis. ■

The writer is an expert on International Law.

PDFs Material For CSS PMS FPSC

The Religion of Peace and Love

Shahzad Malak

All major world religions are christened after their founders or are region-specific. Christianity after Christ, Buddhism after Buddha, Hinduism after area Hind or Hindustan, and so on. But Islam is not confined to any particular locality, region or tribe. Hence, no such connotation is attached to it. Islam is the religion that has been in existence since the dawn of humanity and will remain there to its very end. This is indicative of its universal character. Allah Almighty, in His unbounded Grace and Mercy, has sent prophets to guide and direct mankind and profess His ways to man. From Adam to the last prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), all prophets were the followers of Islam.

"Ibrahim was neither a Jew nor a Christian; he submitted in all uprightness and was not a polytheist."

— Ali 'Imran: 67

Thus, the significance and the credibility of the religion Islam can be discerned from the fact that it is the religion chosen by Allah Himself.

"Today I have perfected your faith for you, completed My favour upon you, and chosen Islam as your way."

— Al-Maidah: 3

The literal meaning of 'Islam' is peace; to surrender one's will, i.e. losing oneself for the sake of God and forsaking one's own pleasure for the pleasure of God. Islam, therefore, shows the most straight and practical way to achieve peace within and without.

Any unjust dissension with fellow beings living in any part of the world will be considered a breach of peace, thus constituting a great sin. In this way, Islam is a binding force that brings to all humans living on the earth a common brotherhood.

The doctrine of unity and solidarity is repeatedly

protected in the Holy Quran. At one place, Allah Almighty declares, *"O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another."*

— Al- Hujarat: 13

Thus, Islam teaches the lesson of universal brotherhood, peace and harmony. Before going into further details, let us look whether or not Islam practically exhibited its teachings of brotherhood, peace and harmony.

At the time the Holy Prophet (PBUH) propagated the message of Islam, the whole of Arabia and its outskirts were steeped into the abyss of chaos, violence and lawlessness. Tribal vendettas, wars and feuds were endemic. But Islam changed the socio-political environment prevalent in the ignorant Arab society. Islam taught the lesson of love, peace, fraternity and tolerance. It was the proof of the sagacity of the last Prophet (PBUH) that peace agreement was brought about between the Arabs and Jews. Termed in history as Mithaq-i-Madina (the Charter of Madina), it was the first written agreement of peace where Muslim strove for the cause of peace and harmony even at the cost of their principles.

In 6AH, when the Holy Prophet (PBUH), accompanied by 400 companions, reached near Makkah with the intention to perform Umrah, they were restrained by the unbelievers of the city (the Quraish of Makkah). After hectic deliberations, an agreement of conciliation was concluded between the Muslims and the Quraish. A ten-year no-war pact, called the Hudaibiyyah Pact, between Muslims and the Quraish contained terms that were clearly against the Muslims. Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) even removed the words "Prophet of Allah" from the agreement with his own hand. So, for

the sake of achieving the goal of peace and avoiding bloodshed, Muslims even accepted the agreement which contained terms, apparently, against them. A spectacular example of treatment meted out to the subjects of the conquered territories can be seen in the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) conduct when Makkah fell to the faithful in 8 AH. He (PBUH) forgot 13 years of brutal atrocities perpetuated on him and his followers by the Quraish. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) announced a general amnesty, thus sowing the seeds of love, peace and tolerance.

In the light of the above citations, it can be seen that pursuit of achieving peace has been one of Islam's hallmarks. Further informative light is thrown by the Quran in this regard. The Quran says, "... whoever takes a life—unless as a punishment for murder or mischief in the land—it will be as if they killed all of humanity; and whoever saves a life, it will be as if they saved all of humanity."

— Al-Ma'idah: 32

These instructions have been repeated in the Holy Quran at another place: "Do not kill a soul which Allah has made sacred except the due process of law."

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) declared homicide as the greatest sin, only next to polytheism. The tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) reads, "The greatest sins are to associate something with God, and kill a human being."

In these verses of the Quran and tradition of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), the word 'soul' has been used in general terms, without any distinction. The injunction applies to all human beings, and the destruction of human life in itself has been prohibited.

The upshot of the above discussion is that Islam is a religion of peace whose fundamentals teach its followers to maintain and promote peace throughout the world. But the unfortunate aspect is that Islam is dubbed as a religion that preaches violence, fundamentalism and terrorism. Before going into details of these allegations, it is fair to analyze the terms, 'fundamentalism and terrorism'. A fundamentalist is a person who follows and adheres to the fundamentals of the doctrine or theory he is following. For a person to be a good doctor; he should

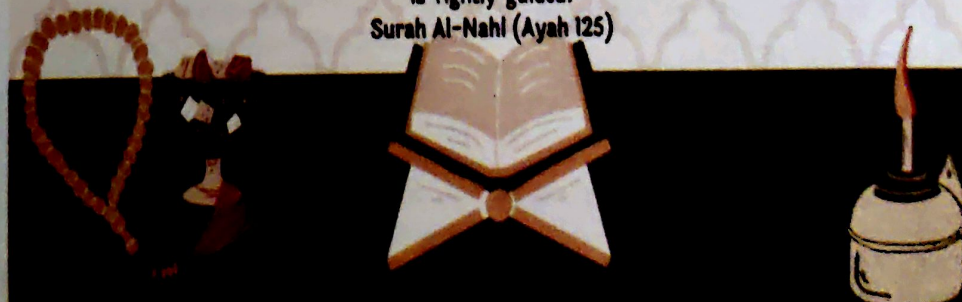
know and follow the practice and the fundamentals of medicine. In other words, he should be a fundamentalist of medicine. For a person to be a laudable scientist, he must know and follow the practice and the fundamentals of science. He must be a fundamentalist in the field of science. One cannot paint all fundamentalists with the same brush. One cannot categorize all fundamentalists as either beneficial or detrimental. Above all, a Christian to be a Christian must believe in the Holy Doctrine of Trinity. In a fashion, every Christian is dogmatic.

In the light of the above discussion, every Muslim would like to be a fundamentalist/traditionalist because he knows, follows and strives to practice the fundamentals of Islam. A true Muslim doesn't demure a way from being called a fundamentalist because he knows that the fundamentals of Islam are beneficial to humanity and the whole of the world. Every single fundamental of Islam brings peace and prosperity to

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَخَدِّ لَهُمُ بِالَّتِي
هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ
بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

Invite 'all' to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and kind advice, and only debate with them in the best manner. Surely your Lord 'alone' knows best who has strayed from His Way and who is 'rightly' guided.

Surah Al-Nahl (Ayah 125)



the world. Many people harbour misconceptions about Islam and consider several teachings of Islam unfair or improper. This is due to the insufficient and incorrect knowledge of Islam.

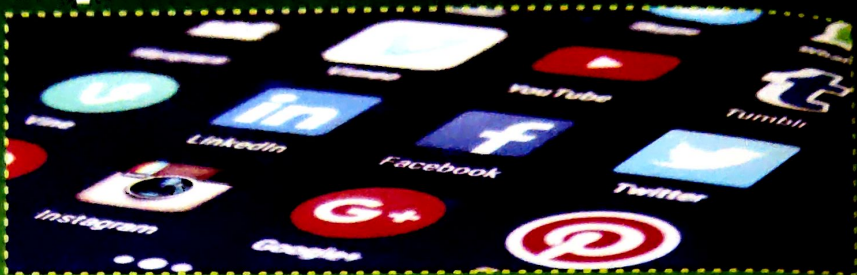
Islam, thus, has been sinned against terribly by the Western world. The malicious propaganda against Islam makes it a misnomer; otherwise, it is a religion of peace and universal brotherhood. ■

The writer is a law student from Hyderabad.

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Opinion Manipulation



The Role of Fake News

Public opinion encompasses the collective views, beliefs and attitudes of the general public on various issues, policies and persons, especially leaders. It is shaped by diverse factors, including social interactions, media, education, cultural norms and personal experiences. In democratic societies, public opinion plays a vital role in shaping policy outcomes, influencing political decisions and guiding the actions of elected officials. As a reflection of the prevailing attitudes in a culture at a given time, public opinion significantly impacts the evolution of society and politics.

In recent years, the term "fake news" has been used to describe false or misleading information presented as factual news, often with the intention to deceive. The rise of the internet and social media has led to a surge in fake news, which can have significant consequences for democracy and society. False information spreads rapidly across social media platforms, where algorithms prioritize engagement over accuracy, and is often amplified by news blogs and websites that fail to fact-check their sources. Secret groups and messaging apps can also create echo chambers where

misinformation goes unchecked. Even traditional media can sometimes inadvertently contribute to the spread of false information due to the pressure to break news quickly. Understanding how fake news shapes public opinion is crucial to addressing this burning issue. The dissemination of false information is heavily influenced by psychological factors, including sensationalism, emotional appeal and confirmation bias, which drive individuals to seek out and accept information that confirms their pre-existing beliefs. The "illusory truth effect" also plays a role, where repeated exposure to false information makes it seem more credible. Additionally, echo chambers and filter bubbles exacerbate the issue by limiting exposure to diverse perspectives, distorting reality and intensifying partisan divisions. Notable case studies, such as the 2016 US Presidential Election, the Brexit referendum, and Covid-19 pandemic, demonstrate the significant impact of fake news on public perception, political decisions and public health outcomes. These examples highlight the real-world consequences of false information on critical issues.

Amjad Ali

The spread of fake news has a profound impact on public opinion, leading to increased societal polarization as people retreat into ideological silos. This phenomenon erodes trust in traditional media sources, causing individuals to become sceptical of all information sources, not just those that disseminate false information. As a result, false information can significantly influence political judgments and voting patterns, undermining the democratic process and potentially leading to election outcomes that do not reflect well-informed decisions. Moreover, fake news fuels cynicism and apathy, dividing people and decreasing public participation in politics, ultimately threatening the very foundations of our democratic system.

A multi-faceted approach is essential to combat the issue of false news. Fact-checking organizations play a vital role in debunking misinformation and providing accurate information. Additionally, media literacy education is crucial to empower individuals to critically evaluate the information they consume. Educators and policymakers must emphasize the importance of critical thinking skills and provide resources to identify trustworthy

EXAM PACK

sources. Furthermore, governments can establish regulations and policies to hold social media platforms accountable for the content shared on their networks, including implementing transparent algorithms and robust content-moderation practices to prevent the spread of false information. Technological advancements offer

and prevent censorship, striking a balance between curbing misinformation and preserving free speech. Civil society plays a vital role in combating false information. Grassroots activists can foster community engagement and critical thinking, while public campaigns can promote fact-checking and raise awareness about the dangers of

psychological impact and its effects on public opinion. Governments, organizations and individuals must collaborate to reduce its impact and protect public discourse. As technology advances, so must our methods for detecting and dispelling false information. We must promote media literacy, encourage responsible information

Social media, today, is not only a tool for communication but a pivotal force in reshaping the life of youth, comprising a major chunk of the population offering significant opportunities and challenges in different countries, including Pakistan.

According to DataReportal, there were 111.0 million internet users in Pakistan at the start of 2024, when internet penetration stood at 45.7 percent. Pakistan was home to 71.70 million social media users in January 2024, equating to 29.5 percent of the total population.

As this tool is used for education and positive information

sharing, it is also used for promoting nefarious propaganda, mudslinging and character assassination. Sometimes, it becomes too lethal for sponsoring anti-state narratives, maligning the nascent minds and

creating unrest in society. Therefore, the saner elements take a strong exception to negative information sharing and tarnishing image of our state institutions, urging to promote and share positive content on these media.

As our youth comprise over 60 percent of the total population, with many among them yet to learn positive use of social media, the government must devise a plan to prepare youth from school level to use social media platforms for positive purposes. It is important to educate them about their responsibilities to use these platforms for positive gains and penalties for their illegal usage.

As the world becomes a global village due to internet connectivity, offering everyone a level playing field to learn

Social Media A boon or bane?



and excel, these platforms can be used for studying, online business and other economic benefits.

In this regard, the government also has an important role to play in devising new

business models and technologies and disseminating this knowledge to citizens, enabling them to compete in the digitally emerging world and benefit from the flow of information in multiple areas. At the same time, we also need to have a strict vigil on misuse of these facilities in promoting hatred and objectionable content, adulterating

innocent minds.

Then there is also political or religious manoeuvring of innocent minds by hostile elements to distract people from their genuine notions and positive thinking. This badly

harms our norms and culture.

Therefore, the government must formulate policies on the responsible use of social media, considering the best international practices. Law enforcement is necessary to check misuse of social media as well as ensuring that our talented youth is positively engaged in the digital realm.

The importance and impact of social media cannot be ignored and there is a dire need to capitalize our youth potential by channelling their talent and potential in the right direction. For this purpose, we need to initiate a special campaign on this important topic to inform our citizens about the merits and demerits of social media.

promising solutions to combat fake news. Machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) can be leveraged to identify and report misleading content by analyzing patterns and sources. AI can help detect bogus news before it spreads widely, but it's crucial to monitor its use to ensure accuracy

misinformation. By encouraging diverse perspectives and informed discussion, communities can build resilience against fake news and cultivate a more informed public. Combatting false information is crucial for democratic societies. To counter its influence, we must understand how it spreads, its

consumption and support policymakers in creating balanced policies. By working together, we can mitigate the harmful effects of fake news and preserve truth and integrity in our society, ensuring a strong and functional democracy. ■

The writer is a lecturer in English.

Sultans and Slaves



The Fascinating Story of the Ottoman Empire's Imperial Harem

The Ottoman Empire, which spanned over six centuries, was renowned for its military conquests, cultural achievements, and sophisticated governance. However, one of its most enigmatic and misunderstood institutions was the Imperial Harem. Often sensationalized in Western literature as a place of leisure and indulgence, the harem was, in reality, a highly structured and politically significant institution. It played a pivotal role in the social, political and cultural life of the empire, shaping the fates of both the Ottoman dynasty and the empire itself.

The word harem is derived from an Arabic word *haraam* which means "forbidden" or "sacred." The harem in the Ottoman Empire

and wives, his offspring and the non-Muslim female captives and women who were brought into the empire as spoils of war or through purchase.

Far from being a mere place of luxury, the harem was a crucial center of power within the empire. It was a place that was used to make political deals, determine successions of dynasties and take major decisions of states, mostly in secret. The women of the harem, especially the Sultan's mother and the favoured concubines, had the power to control the imperial court and this is referred to as the Sultanate of Women.

The Role of the Valide Sultan: power behind the throne

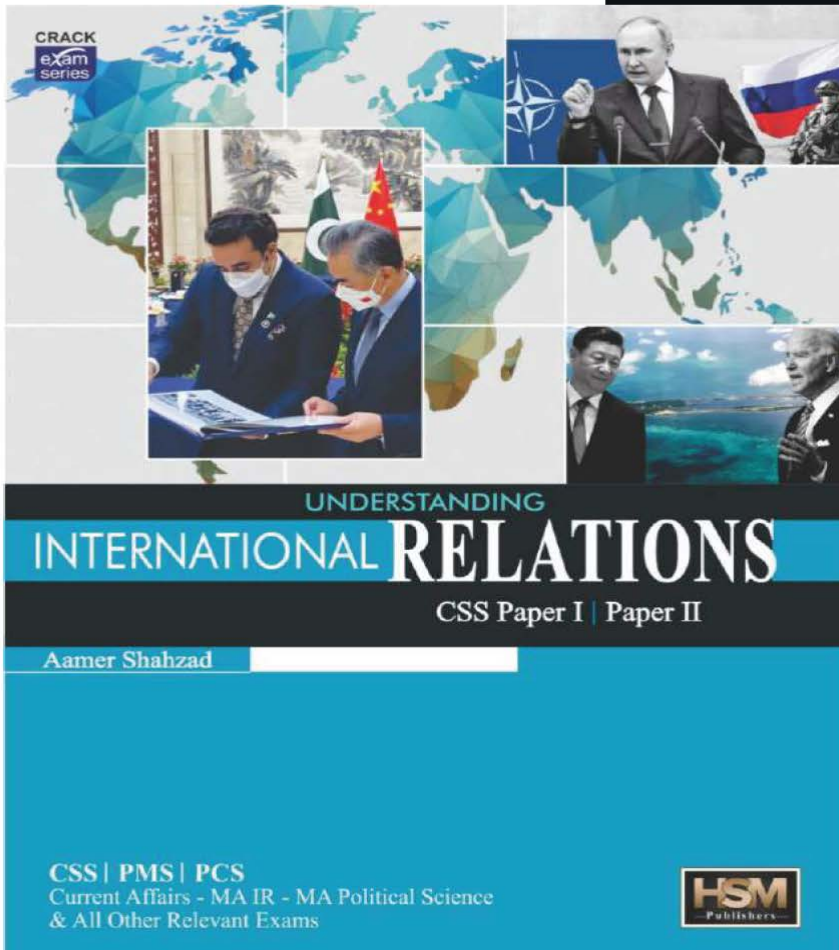
One of the most powerful figures in the Ottoman Empire was the




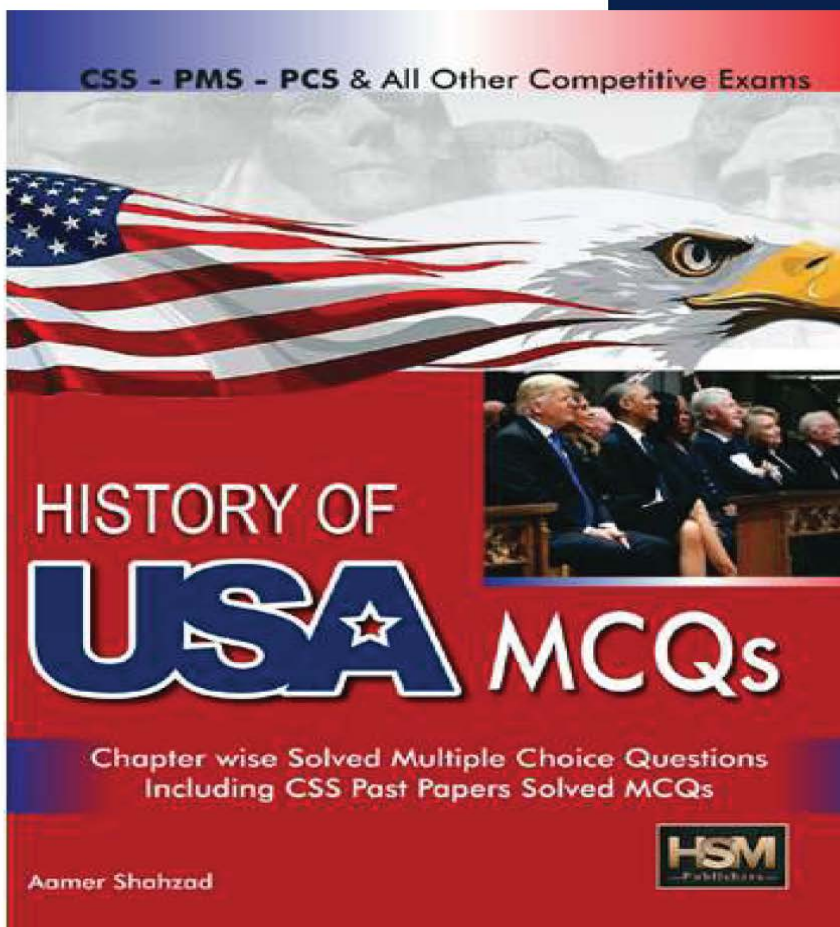
Amna Hashmi

Valide Sultan or the Sultan's mother. The Valide Sultan held immense political influence, often acting as an advisor to her son and even making key decisions regarding the empire's governance. She governed the women in the harem, had power over money and was feared by the palace and the army. Perhaps the most famous example of a Valide Sultan is *Hurrem Sultan* (also known as *Roxelana*), the wife of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. She was initially brought to the harem as a slave, but her intelligence and beauty quickly gained her the Sultan's favor. Eventually, Hurrem became his legal wife and one of the most influential women in Ottoman history. She was directly involved in political matters, including diplomacy and the running of the state's internal affairs, as well as supervising charitable projects like the building of mosques and hospitals.

The Valide Sultan was not only a person who gave advice to her son personally, she could also influence the foreign policy by arranging marriages between Ottoman princesses and influential leaders of the region. This



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made the harem an active place of diplomacy where relations were forged and political debts paid.

The Concubines: From slaves to power players

The harem was populated by enslaved women who were brought into the empire through conquest or purchase, mostly from Christian lands in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. These women were trained in the arts, culture and etiquette of the court. While many remained in obscurity, a select few rose to prominence by capturing the Sultan's attention.

A concubine could be promoted to a higher status if she gave birth to a male heir, and she would then have much power. There was always competition between the concubines for the Sultan's attention as well as for the future of their sons, which resulted in plotting and scheming within the harem. This competition was particularly intense because the ultimate aim was to make sure that one's son inherited the throne and hence the survival of the dynasty and also the mother's future power.

Sometimes these women rose from the status of an enslaved person and became influential figures in the political system of the empire. Most of them were literates and some of them held the capacity to influence diplomatic and military strategies. For instance, Kösem Sultan, another former concubine, became one of the most influential women in Ottoman history and held political power for several decades during the reign of her sons and grandsons.

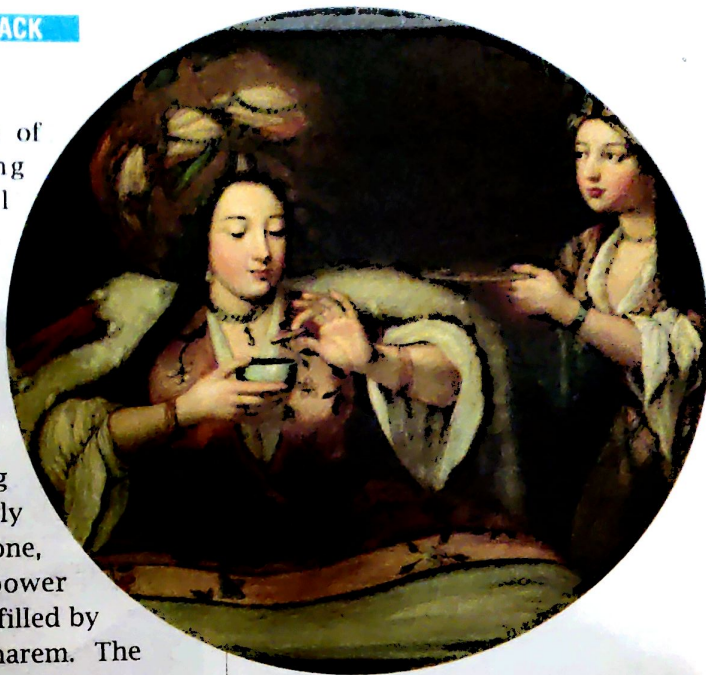
The Sultanate of Women: A unique period of Ottoman history

The period between the 16th and 17th centuries is often referred to

as the "Sultanate of Women", during which several Valide Sultans and prominent concubines played decisive roles in Ottoman governance. During this time, weak or young sultans frequently ascended the throne, leading to a power vacuum that was filled by women of the harem. The influence of these women over the political and military affairs of the empire was so pronounced that some historians argue they effectively ruled the empire from behind the scenes. An example was Safiye Sultan, a Venetian-born woman who became the wife of Murad III and actively participated in political and foreign affairs, including diplomacy with European countries. In the period of the Ottoman Sultan Murad III, she maintained correspondence with Queen Elizabeth I of England to make sure that Ottomans kept on having good business and political relationships with the English monarchy.

Misconceptions about the Harem

The Western perception of the Ottoman harem, especially in the 19th century, was that of a rather sensual and hedonistic place of pleasure. This Orientalist perspective concealed the political and social processes that determined the harem's purpose. In fact, the harem was anything but just a sign of luxury; it was a reflection of the Ottoman Empire's political hierarchy, where politics, diplomacy and succession struggles occurred. Contrary to what one might



expect, the women of the harem were not powerless at all. While most of them were considered slaves, their status in the empire could change significantly depending on their wit, greed and capacity to sway the Sultan and the court. The Imperial Harem, therefore, was not only a place of interpersonal relations but also a power base and a place for social engineering.

Conclusion

The story of the Ottoman Imperial Harem is a rich and complex tale of power, politics and social transformation. It was not merely a secluded and sensual enclave, as often portrayed, but a vital institution that influenced the course of the empire's history. While some of the most powerful women in the Ottoman Empire, such as Valide Sultans, wielded significant political influence, so did the concubines who fought for the throne. ■

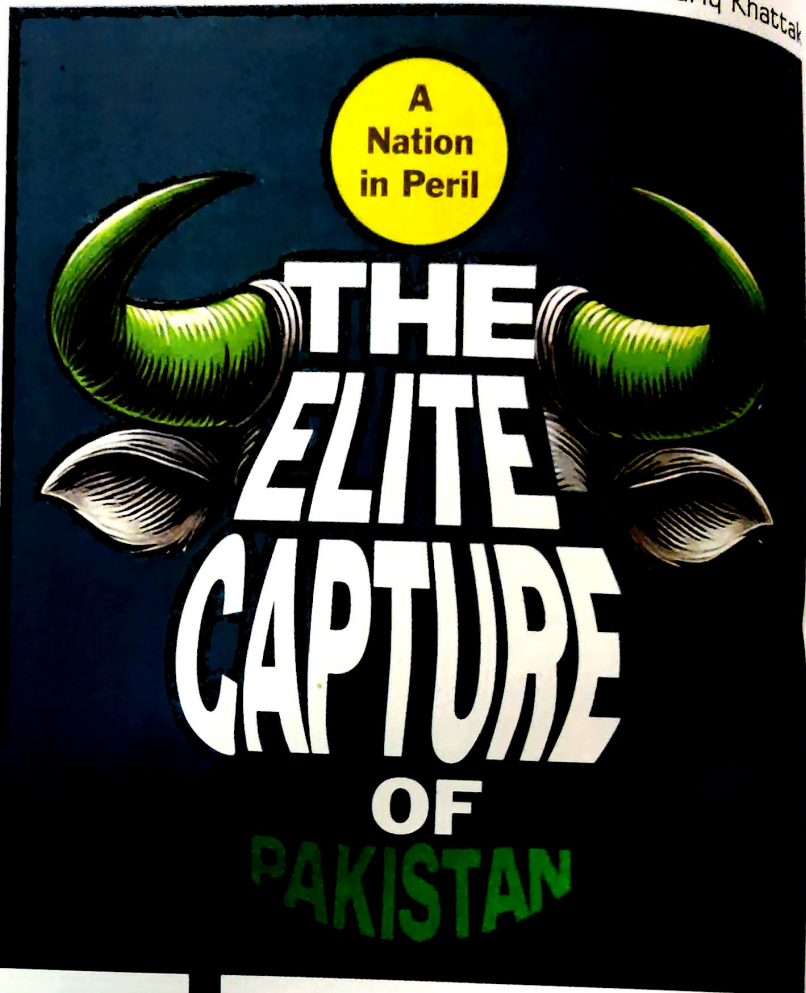
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Pakistan has sadly turned into a land for the privileged, where the grip on power is held by a small number of individuals. Not only has this accumulation of power caused a wide gulf between the haves and the have-nots, but has also created a status quo in which the children of the elite are trained to take over these positions. From the bureaucracy to the judiciary; from the political cabinets to economic decision-making; a minuscule one percent controls the entire state structure. The future of this trend, if left unchecked, paints a bleak picture for the rest of the population, with a handful of privileged families holding an unshakeable monopoly over the nation's resources and power. while the rest of the 99

Pakistan is more and more becoming a victim of a ruling elite, and this elite is making wider and wider the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots," and the majority of the people have very limited opportunities. This aristocratic rule of one percent permeates all institutions, be they political or educational, and it makes a mockery of meritocracy and breeds resentment among the 99 percent. If left unchecked, this path threatens to fracture society further and incite unrest, endangering the nation's future stability.

percent are mere spectators. Today, this elite capture is apparent in every institution in Pakistan. In universities and public offices, there are special quotas for the children of the powerful to make sure that they get their share of the best opportunities. Be it in the bureaucracy, the judiciary or politics, there is always a back door for the select few. Like, for example, in many state institutions, 5-10% of the seats are reserved for the top, so the other 90% of us who are just as deserving never get



a chance to rise on merit. The poor get taxed at an alarming rate and the rich get all the perks and privileges as there is a sheer lack of accountability. Even the Supreme Court of Pakistan, the epitome of justice, suffers from this lack of balance, with the overwhelming majority of the judges coming from the same few elite schools and law colleges. The same goes for politicians and bureaucrats; they all seem to know each other and went to the same schools, like Aitchison College, for example. This little, incestuous web creates policies that benefit it and forces the rest of us to foot the bill. The repercussions of this deep-rooted elite capture are staggering. There is absolutely no progress in the country because all the policies are made to keep the rich, rich and not to help the poor rise up. If the rich and powerful will only marry each other, then a wider social cohesion is next to impossible. Almost all Pakistanis are gripped in the whirlwind of poverty with little or no facilities for education, health or employment. As the haves get more, income inequality only increases. And that sort of fluidity breeds resentment and disenchantment among the 99% who are not listed, which is why this space would be a

cauldron for discontent. Fertile brains drain off the country to benefit the other nations. Natural uniqueness and joint feelings of hate and resentment are accumulating like boiling lava that may explode any moment. The chaos and devastation waiting ahead for the nation will forgive none; rich or poor, male or female, young or old. Nature will autocorrect its balance, but this process is not without price. The army, which used to be respected for its strictness and merit, has also fallen prey to the problem of elite capture that plagues Pakistan. It has grown to become an emblem of class division, where access and advantages are more and more exclusive to a small

remaining 99% reduced to mere spectators in their own country. The class distinction would be even more obvious; the peons would be serfs of the modern world, working under the barons of the world who would control everything, while the peons allow the barons to live in luxury. The idea of meritocracy would be a long-lost memory because every important position in the nation would be passed down through genes instead of being earned. This kind of future will only serve to widen the socio-political rifts in this country and may very well lead to riots, civil disobedience and, possibly, even violent insurrections as people rise up against a system that refuses to allow

What is Elite Capture?

Defined as a Situation

The situations where the elites shape development processes according to their own priorities and/or appropriate development resources for private gain.

Defined as a Process

The process by which powerful elites skim resources intended for the bottom, and define policies in a way that protects their own interests.

They corner resources for their own benefit, by corrupt acts, which, in the normal course, would not have come to them.

Elite influence comes from their ability to control resources, which have considerable economic value. Their control over productive assets and institutions allows them to influence the allocation of both resources and authority.

Negative Outcomes

- Elites have control over community decisions and have autonomy to craft rules that discourage community involvement in the development project.

- Due to the higher level of inequality in rural settings, elites have more influence over community decisions and a greater ability to co-opt influential members of the community. This is empirically true for communities that are heterogeneous and have large populations; both factors act as barriers to collective action, and hence such communities are more prone to elite capture.
- In addition to traditional elites, there are development brokers from urban-based NGOs or other organizations which through virtue of their discursive power and co-optation with the traditional elites, can obtain leadership positions at the village level and gain control of development resources. These projects are purposefully initiated before sufficient capacity-building measures are implemented.
- The development projects elites are involved in move forward with implementation before clear rules and processes are established to guide its activities.

number of people from affluent and powerful families. This "trend" has basically abolished the meritocratic nature of the institution for an unaccountable elite culture that rewards contacts and not competence. The noblism has even seeped deeper into the inequality, which has kept many talented individuals from lower classes from being able to compete strictly because of their class. This aristocratization is a part of a larger problem in Pakistan in general: the concentration of power among fewer and fewer people and the erosion of the ideal of a merit-based system where status does not determine success.

If most people believe that the system is stacked against them, then they lose confidence in institutions, and the bedrock of a democracy is shaken. Fast forwarding into the future; if this trend does not stop, that could be disastrous. In 40 years, Pakistan could be entirely ruled by an unaccountable elite, with the

them an equal share of power or resources.

The present situation and future trend analysis lead to the conclusion that Pakistan is on the path of elite entrenchment, where a select group of few privileged individuals will dominate governance, economy and public life. The ramifications of this are evident even now, as most of the nation is shut out from any real contribution to development. If this goes on, Pakistan will be a state where only a few can have opportunity, justice and progress. The only way to avoid this is through a deliberate effort to reverse this elite capture by striving for merit-based governance, equal opportunity and policies that benefit all Pakistanis, and not just a few wealthy ones.

The writer is a PhD Scholar at Punjab University, Lahore, and is currently serving as an Assistant Director in BoR (KP).



In recent years, the proliferation of Artificial Intelligence has revolutionized various sectors, promising efficiency, innovation and advancement. However, alongside its transformative power comes a growing concern: the environmental impact of AI technologies. While AI offers immense potential for optimization and automation, its operation often entails substantial energy consumption, contributes to e-waste accumulation and leaves a significant carbon footprint.

Although it is widely believed that the use of artificial intelligence (AI) can help significantly reduce humanity's environmental footprint, development and demand for AI tools come with a growing concern over their environmental cost. Several research studies have brought to light AI's significant need for energy, including electricity and water consumption. For example, data centers, which are crucial for powering AI, already account for about 1%-1.5% of global electricity use. The rapid growth of AI will significantly raise this percentage. To cool these data centers, huge quantities of water are used - about 16 oz. for every 5-50 AI prompts. Researchers estimate that creating ChatGPT used 1,287 megawatt hours of electricity and produced 552 tons of CO₂, equal to driving 123 gas-powered cars for a year. But the energy consumption isn't just confined to training these models; their usage contributes significantly more. Generating an image can be especially energy-intensive, requiring as much power as fully charging your smartphone. Some models are even more demanding. Producing 1,000 images with Stable Diffusion XL is responsible for as much CO₂ as

Muhammad Hamza

driving 4.1 miles in a car.

Predictions indicate that by 2027, NVIDIA could be releasing 1.5 million AI server units annually. These servers could use over 85.4 terawatt-hours of electricity each year, more than the annual consumption of many small countries.

Some researchers estimate that the carbon footprint of an AI prompt is 4-5 times higher than a search-engine query. If Google's 9 billion searches per day were instead AI chatbot queries, it would require as much power to run an entire country like Ireland.

Some Studies

A recent study by the Yale School of Environment sheds a darker light on the new-age technology's energy use, especially in terms of immediate environmental impact. From massive water and electricity consumption to a lack of data on it, AI's effect on our environment is all but flowery. The study says, "One consequence of the explosion of artificial intelligence is clear: this technology's environmental footprint is large and growing." AI's carbon footprint, if left unregulated, can have dire impacts on SDG and emission reduction targets.

AI systems will become increasingly embedded in the global economy in the next decade. They should be treated like any other factor that increases energy and resource consumption. If not, these systems will erode our global progress around SDG and emission reduction targets.

In addition, in its annual environment report released recently, Google reported a 13% increase in its emissions footprint in 2023 compared with the previous year. The rise was attributed mainly to the increased electricity consumption in its data centres and supply chains. Google said its data centres consumed 17%

more electricity in 2023, and added that this trend was expected to continue in the coming years because of greater deployment and usage of its AI tools.

Also, a report by the London-based International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) states that according to a recent study, by 2027, the AI industry could be using up as much natural resources and energy as a country the size of the Netherlands.

Possible impacts

Here are some of the ways AI could prove harmful to the planet:

a. Disposal & electronic waste

AI requires more technology and computers to be running than usual, meaning at the end of its life cycle, AI could create more electronic waste than previous computer systems installed at business facilities.

b. Excess energy consumption

AI systems can help us see things we can't with the naked eye alone, but the price of this increased knowledge can put strain on the planet - as more energy is required to run AI systems. Therefore, AI could lead to greater carbon emissions, especially if the AI systems used amongst businesses are not running on renewable energy sources.

c. A lack of incentive

While it's true that AI can help with the development of a business's climate plan, it can't implement that plan for the company in question. Therefore, AI could negatively impact the environment by generating too many ideas to the extent it prohibits a coherent action plan.

d. Stress on our energy grids

It has been well documented that when new technology endeavours arise, such as AI, it results in a shortage across our electricity grids. This means that as we stray away from the use of fossil fuels to power our homes, more electricity will be needed to power homes - something that will become sparse if all that said electricity is used to power AI or conduct AI research.

e. Necessary data storage

AI cannot run without adequate data storage, which creates its own carbon footprint - such as from the maintenance and the energy required to cool overheating data storage.

f. Potential AI miscalculations

AI is an excellent choice for doing tedious tasks that nobody wants to do when a computer can do it - like spellchecking or asking what the weather is outside. However, AI lacks personal judgement the way humans do - AI's algorithms may miscalculate the impact a natural disaster could have on a community, leaving the affected area without the correct amount

of resources it needs.

A worrying prognosis

As AI tools are deployed more widely, their impact on energy consumption worldwide is expected to rise sharply. Already, data centres account for between 1% and 1.3% of the global electricity demand. This could double by 2026, according to recent projections by the International Energy Agency (IEA). By contrast, despite the large number of electric vehicles on the road, their share of global electricity consumption was just about 0.5%, the IEA said.

At the level of countries, the electricity consumption of data centres as a share of the national demand has already crossed double digits in several regions. In Ireland, which has a disproportionately large number of data centres because of the tax breaks and incentives it offers, this share has reached 18%, IEA numbers show. In the United States, the country with the largest number of data centres, this number was estimated to be between 1.3% and 4.5%.

Alternative view

Other estimates suggest that the large-scale deployment of AI could help in significant reductions of emissions globally. A recent study by the Boston Consulting Group found that application of AI to corporate and industrial practices could result in a 5%-10% reduction in global emissions by 2030, while generating a value worth \$1.3 trillion to \$2.6 trillion through additional revenues or cost savings.

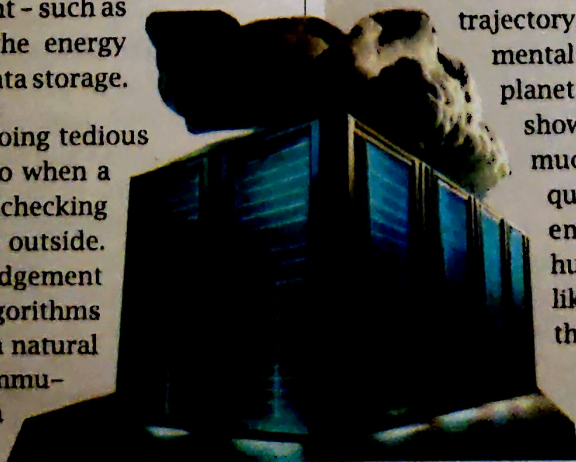
Emissions reductions can happen if AI is deployed to monitor and predict emissions in processes, and optimize these to eliminate wastage or inefficiencies.

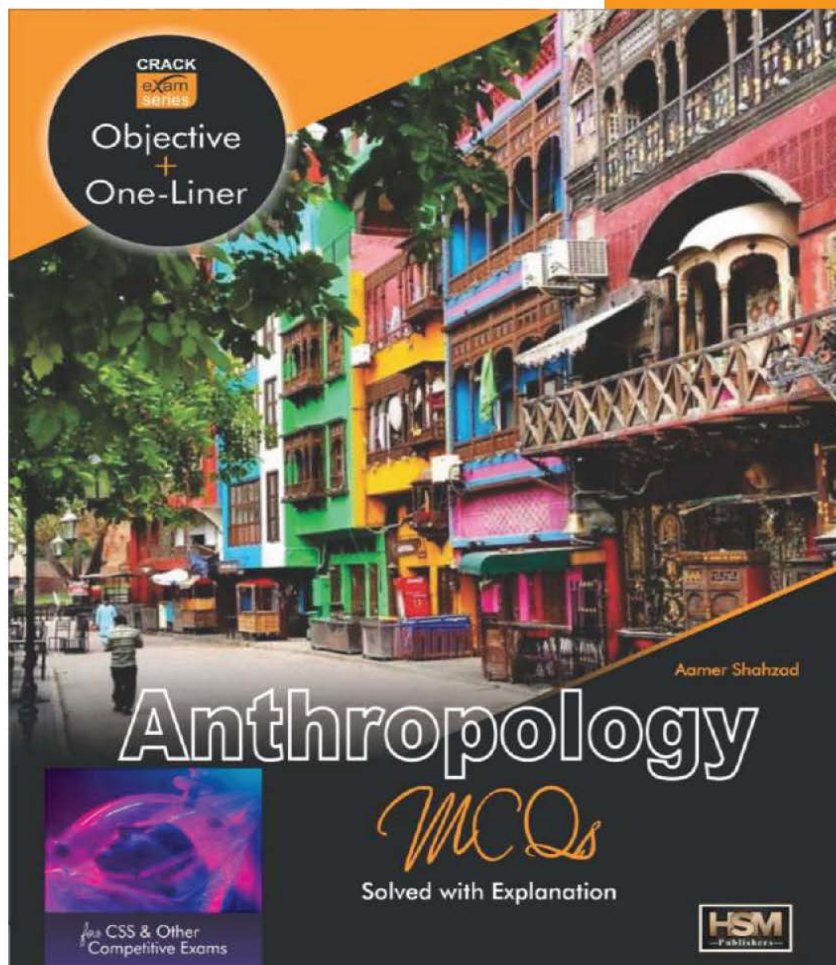
Conclusion

AI can be equally beneficial and harmful to the planet, meaning either changes will need to be made to AI in order to mitigate the potential environmental impact on behalf of AI - or individuals and companies alike - will have to manage their expectations and use AI more sparingly or only under specific scenarios.

If AI development continues on its current trajectory, it will compound the environmental harm we are already doing to our planet, long before it gets the chance to show us whether it can live up to its much-hyped potential. The real question, then, is whether such environmental harms and the human rights violations that are likely to come with them are worth the gamble. ■

The writer is a member of staff.





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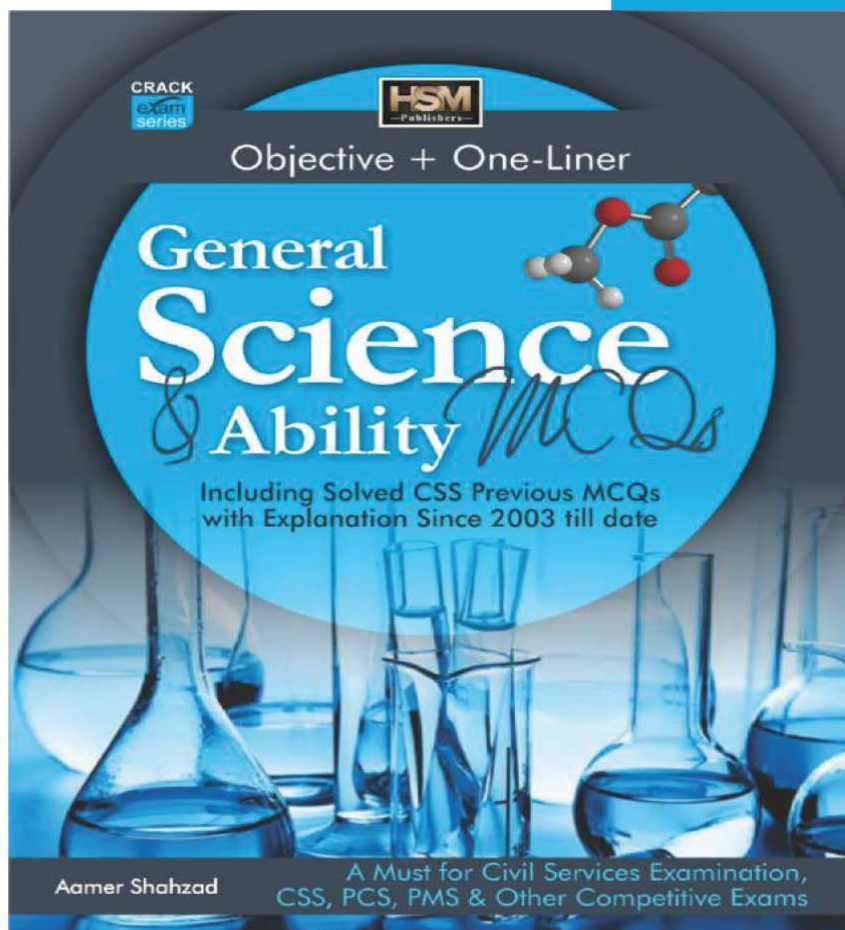
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PROS AND CONS OF

MOOCs

Education - like every other sector - has undergone a digital transformation in recent years as the widespread availability of high-speed internet connections and cloud computing has enabled educators to offer online courses at scale. Individual educators, educational institutions and government agencies, as well as non- and for-profit companies, seized on that opportunity, creating Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) that are open to all interested learners. Today, millions of people around the world use MOOCs to learn for a variety of reasons, including career development, changing careers, college preparations, supplemental learning, lifelong learning, corporate eLearning and training, and more.

Introduction

A Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is a model for delivering learning content online to any person who wants to take a course, with no limit on attendance. The 'M' stands for massive because there is no limit to the number of students who can enrol from anywhere in the world. Most MOOCs are made by universities. Some of the first and most active MOOC-makers are Stanford, MIT and Harvard. Some MOOCs are made by companies, such as Microsoft or Google, or by various

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have revolutionized higher education by making it more accessible, flexible and relevant to current and future needs. These free, online courses designed for limitless participation help learners across the globe acquire new skills, brush up on their professional skills and pursue credentials. By joining these MOOCs, the learners can access courses from top universities and institutions worldwide, gaining a global perspective and networking opportunities. However, they have their own advantages and disadvantages. The following article explores a plethora of advantages for learners who seek to expand their knowledge and skillsets, while also enumerating some disadvantages that must be kept in mind by those who aspire to join such a course.

M. Usman Butt

organizations, such as IEEE or the Linux Foundation. MOOCs range in length from 1 to 16 weeks. Most provide an estimate of the weekly time commitment, although this may vary significantly from one learner to another. MOOCs encompass a vast array of subjects, from astrophysics to photography. A 2023 study by Class Central found that over 180 million learners have enrolled in MOOCs worldwide, highlighting their immense reach.

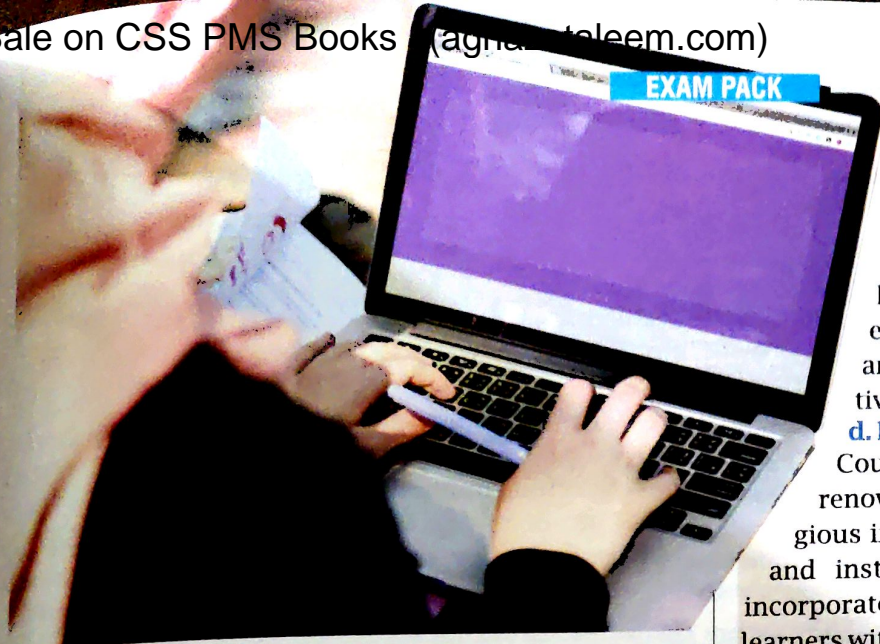
A brief history

MOOCs were first started in 2008. Created by George Siemens and Stephen Downs, it was called "Connectivism and Connective Knowledge/2008" or CCK08. It was created as a credit course for the University of Manitoba. CCK08 had 25 students who had paid fees

for the course and around 2200 learners who took the course for free.

MOOCs really took off in 2012, when Professors Sebastian Thrun and Peter Norvig of Stanford University offered the online course called "Introduction to Artificial Intelligence". This course had approximately 1,600,000 students participating from 190 countries. After the success of this MOOC, Thrun and Norvig started Udacity, a business model for online knowledge sharing. There are also a few other providers, including Coursera and EdX.

Structure



The structure of an MOOC can vary, but all of those typically include pre-recorded video lectures, interactive quizzes, downloadable materials and discussion forums. Some MOOCs even offer opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction and collaborative projects.

Categories

MOOCs are further divided into two categories - cMOOCs and xMOOCs.

cMOOCs: These are MOOCs that allow for dynamic development of study material. That is, instead of having a pre-planned set of reading materials and courseware, the material will be developed through online discussions and collaborations among learners taking the course across the globe.

xMOOCs: On the other hand, these MOOCs believe in the conventional approach where the courses are well-structured with pre-selected reading and reference materials.

Advantages

MOOCs offer many advantages, particularly for professionals who want to add skills but don't have time, money or the need to pursue advanced degrees, according to researchers, workplace trainers, education advocates and HR professionals.

a. Accessibility and affordability

Perhaps the most significant advantage of MOOCs is their affordability. A 2022 report by UNESCO states that 32% of the world's youth is excluded from higher education. MOOCs bridge this gap by offering high-quality education at little to no cost, making knowledge acquisition accessible to everyone regardless of socioeconomic background.

b. Flexibility and self-paced learning

MOOCs cater to busy schedules. The asynchronous nature allows learners to access course materials and complete assignments at their own pace. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for working professionals or individuals with family commitments.

c. Diversity of courses and renowned instructors

MOOC platforms boast a vast library of courses, encompassing virtually any subject imaginable. Learners can gain knowledge from renowned professors and experts from prestigious institutions around the world, bringing a global perspective to their education.

d. High-quality content

Courses are often created and taught by renowned professors and experts from prestigious institutions, ensuring high-quality content and instruction. Moreover, MOOCs can quickly incorporate the latest research and trends, providing learners with current and relevant information.

d. Upskilling and reskilling

In an ever-evolving job market, MOOCs provide a valuable tool for upskilling or reskilling. Learners can acquire in-demand skills to enhance their career prospects or transition into new fields.

e. Community and collaboration

While some MOOCs might be self-directed, many offer opportunities for interaction. Discussion forums and online communities allow learners to connect with peers, share insights and foster a sense of belonging within the learning environment.

f. Lifelong learning

MOOCs provide opportunities for lifelong learning, allowing individuals to continually update their skills and knowledge throughout their careers. In addition, beyond professional development, MOOCs offer courses on personal interests and hobbies, contributing to overall personal growth and fulfilment.

g. Institutional benefits

Universities and institutions can extend their educational offerings to a global audience, increasing their impact and visibility. MOOCs provide a platform for experimenting with innovative teaching methods and technologies, contributing to educational research and improvement.

h. Scalability

MOOCs can accommodate thousands of learners simultaneously, making it possible to educate large numbers of people without the constraints of physical classrooms. The digital nature of MOOCs allows for efficient use of resources, such as content reuse and scalable infrastructure.

The Minuses

While MOOCs have revolutionized access to education and provide numerous benefits, they also have several disadvantages and limitations. The controversy surrounding MOOCs includes some pretty strong concerns about how they will shape the future of higher education. These challenges can affect the

effectiveness of MOOCs and the overall learning experience for participants. Here are some key disadvantages of MOOCs:

a. Lack of personalized instruction

MOOCs generally lack personalized guidance. Students encountering difficulties might not receive the one-on-one support often available in a physical classroom. It's impossible to facilitate meaningful conversation in a classroom with 150,000 students. There are electronic alternatives: message boards, forums, chat rooms, etc. but the intimacy of face-to-face communication is lost, emotions often misunderstood.

b. One-size-fits-all content

MOOCs often use standardized content that may not address the specific needs and learning styles of individual students, making it difficult for some learners to fully grasp the material.

c. High dropout rates

The open and flexible nature of MOOCs can be a double-edged sword. The absence of a structured

quizzes, are common in MOOCs but may not adequately measure complex understanding or critical thinking skills. Peer assessments can be inconsistent and subjective.

g. Isolation

Online learning can be isolating, as students miss out on the social aspects of traditional classrooms, such as group discussions, peer interactions and collaborative projects.

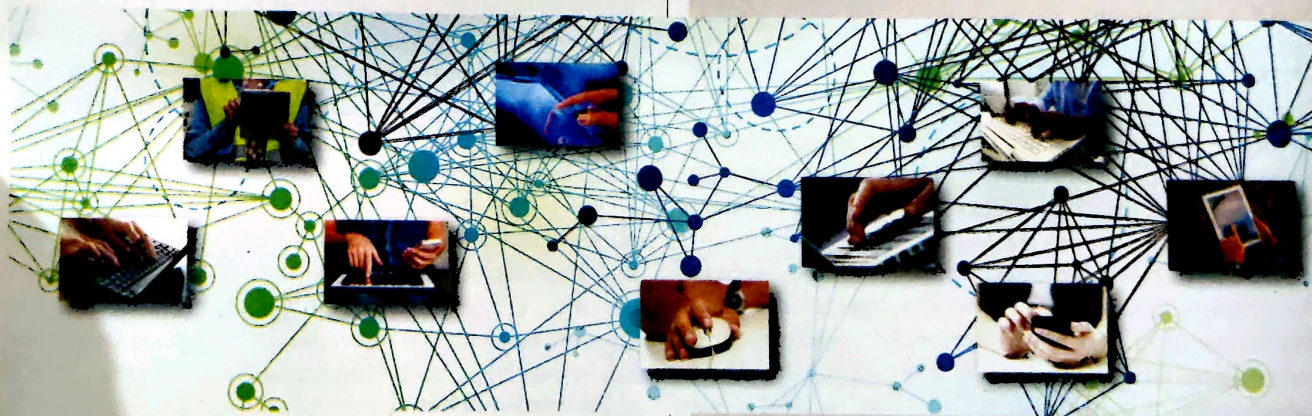
h. Networking opportunities

MOOCs generally do not provide the same networking opportunities as traditional educational settings, where students can build relationships with peers, faculty and industry professionals.

i. Make discussions challenging

This is a particular challenge for humanities courses. When three great scholars teach a poem in three ways, it isn't inefficiency; it is the premise on which all humanistic inquiry is based.

j. Intellectual property, financial issues



learning environment and face-to-face interaction can lead to a lack of motivation and discipline among learners. Although it allows for self-paced learning, it can also lead to high dropout rates. Learners might struggle with self-motivation and time management, ultimately abandoning the course before completion.

d. Variable course quality

The sheer volume of MOOCs available can be overwhelming. Course quality can vary significantly and learners need to be discerning when choosing an MOOC. Researching the course provider and instructor's reputation can help ensure a valuable learning experience.

e. Credibility of certificates

While many MOOCs offer certificates of completion, these credentials are often not as widely recognized or valued by employers and academic institutions as traditional degrees.

f. Assessment limitations

Automated assessments, such as multiple-choice

Who owns an online course when the professor who creates it moves to another university? Who gets paid for teaching and/or creating online courses? These are issues that MOOC companies will need to work out in the upcoming years.

Conclusion

While MOOCs have democratized access to education and provide flexible, cost-effective learning opportunities, they also come with several significant disadvantages. Issues such as lack of personalized instruction, low completion rates, assessment limitations and the digital divide highlight the challenges that need to be addressed to improve the effectiveness and impact of MOOCs. As the landscape of online education continues to evolve, addressing these drawbacks will be crucial to maximizing the potential benefits of MOOCs and ensuring they contribute meaningfully to the broader educational ecosystem. ■

The writer is an Assistant Editor of JWT.

Revitalizing Parliamentary Democracy in Pakistan

In most of the developing countries, including Pakistan, state institutions, i.e. the legislature, executive, judiciary and military, outstretch their respective domains. The political history of Pakistan is filled with constitutional eventualities and extraconstitutional adventurism by the state organs. Here, democracy has tried to establish itself, but the state institutions hardly adhere to their constitutional jurisdictions. Although democratic spirit is there, efforts to assert more dominance by these institutions have undermined the parliamentary spirit and its supremacy. Resultantly, an institutional imbalance, which does not reflect true democracy, is omnipresent in the country.



Nasrullah Golo

Secondly, the rise of terrorism and extremism threatens the development of democracy. Pakistan has witnessed numerous terrorist attacks in recent years, leading to significant human and economic losses. To combat this, political parties must unanimously strengthen the National Security Committee. They should meet at least once

Pakistan came into existence as a democratic state, yet it has swung between parliamentary and presidential forms of government over the years. Currently, Pakistan has a parliamentary system; however, the country still struggles to fully embrace parliamentary politics.

Since its independence, Pakistan has experienced a continuous tug-of-war between political leaders and undemocratic forces, which has hindered the nation's socio-political development. To foster socio-economic and political progress, political leaders must adopt a sense of responsibility and follow these recommendations.

The first and immediate recommendation is to preserve civilian rule, which is the lifeblood of parliamentary democracy. Repeated challenges from undemocratic forces undermine the will of the people. Pakistan's history reflects a bleak picture of democracy in this regard. The essence of democracy lies in maintaining civilian supremacy and upholding principles such as liberty, equality and the rule of law. Unfortunately, Pakistan has repeatedly failed to fulfil these requirements. The country experienced frequent changes in government until its first constitution was adopted in 1956. Additionally, military coups have hampered the growth of political parties. The recent acknowledgment of military interference in politics by former Army Chief, General (Retd) Qamar Javed Bajwa, raises significant concerns. To counter this, Pakistan's political leaders must ensure that power institutions and intelligence agencies adhere strictly to their constitutional boundaries.

every 1-2 months to discuss the security situation and find ways to combat the rising challenges. It will also help improve civil-military relations.

Third, an informed voting system is essential for a strong parliamentary democracy. Voters must be educated about party platforms and encouraged to vote based on a candidate's track record, not emotional attachment to a particular person or a party. Emotional voting leads to the election of leaders who often lack the interest or ability to strengthen the democratic system.

Additionally, empowering local governments is vital for the health of a democratic state. Devolution of power ensures the proper functioning of the state, whereas centralization exacerbates the hardships faced by the people. While the 18th Amendment devolved power to Pakistan's provinces, local governments remain weak and often lack autonomy. Our neighbouring country, India, faced similar challenges, but it addressed them through the 1992 constitutional amendments, which empowered local governments. This devolution of power contributed to India's economic rise, allowing it to become the world's fifth-largest economy. Our leaders must also recognize the need to devolve powers, finances and responsibilities to local bodies to ensure economic and social development and political stability. In conclusion, parliamentary democracy in Pakistan has been crumbling for years. Political leaders must acknowledge their responsibilities and respect the public mandate. Without these reforms, the country will continue to struggle with the challenges it faces today. ■

The writer is from Kandhkot, Sindh.

EXAM PACK

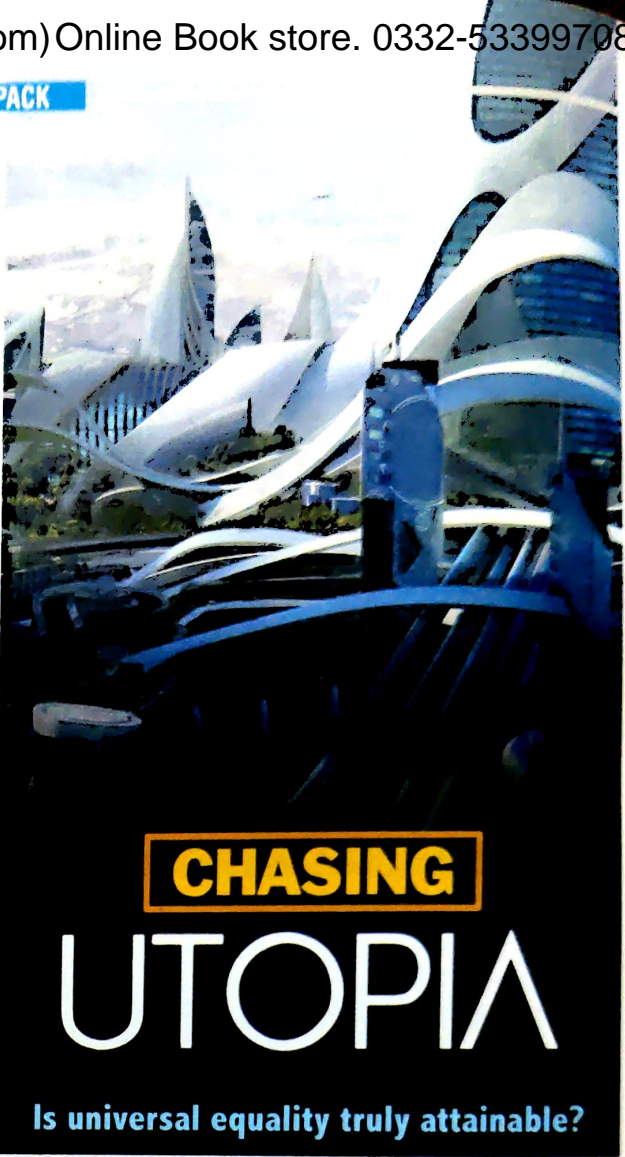
Vareesha Shakeel

Man's desire for equality stands in stark contrast to the undeniable truth that nature never intended us to be equal. The concept of universal equality envisions a world where all individuals enjoy equal rights, opportunities and access to resources. However, this has not been actualized for the reasons including differences in innate abilities, geographical constraints, scarcity of resources and social systems. Exploring these aspects reveals that it may be impossible to have absolute parity, but equity should be pursued for a more just society.

Utopia refers to an ideal and perfect society where everyone is equal, and peace and harmony rule the landscapes. It is practically an unachievable state of society that can only be idealized. In today's world, the rich continue to amass wealth while, the poor face increasing hardships; the powerful consolidate more influence while marginalized communities experience deepening discrimination. This raises the need for universal equality. But is it really an achievable goal? There are several reasons why seeking universal equality is like chasing utopia.

People's innate abilities vary greatly, with strengths possessed by one individual often absent in another. From appearance to intellect, humour and wit, individuals cannot choose what they want for themselves. This underlies universal discrepancies among individuals. In fact, the universe functions on the basis of inherent differences. According to the WHO, 1.3 billion individuals, almost 16% of the global population, are born each year with disabilities. These people have to work significantly harder than those without any disabilities. For them, the basic necessities of life are daily challenges that require immense effort and resilience to overcome. Given such inherent disparities, the notion of achieving universal equality transforms into an unattainable ideal.

One of the core concepts of capitalism is that money begets money. The rich benefit from compounding interests, favourable taxation policies, access to exceptional educational facilities, investment and opportunities, whereas the poor can barely make both ends meet, ending up in a vicious cycle of poverty and debt. The wealth accumulates in a few hands. With the practicality of the capitalistic system, as explained by Karl Marx in his book "Das Kapital" (The Capital), where he discusses the exploitative nature of capitalism and the reality of never-ending class struggles, universal equality, which



CHASING

UTOPIA

Is universal equality truly attainable?

is prone to the competitive economic framework, has become a utopian idea.

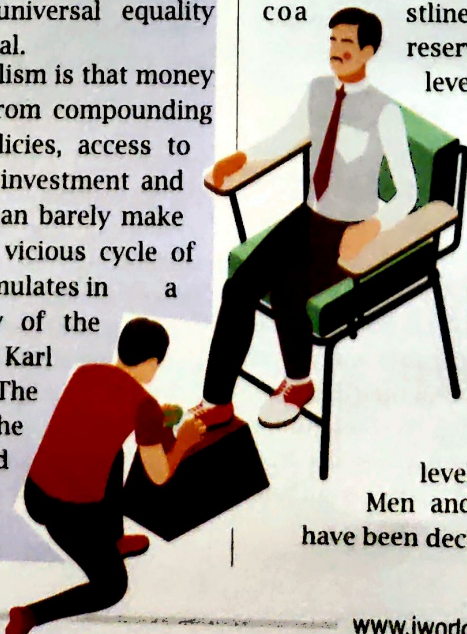
Geography has also been notably inequitable to humankind. While some regions enjoy several seasons, arable lands, turbulent rivers and miles-long coasts, others face challenges such as barren landscape s, arid conditions and a lack of rivers and coa stlines. The USA holds the largest gold

reserves in the world, giving it natural leverage over other states. Moreover,

the Middle Eastern region accounts for 31.5% of global oil production and has capitalized on it for decades. These geographical and resource-based disparities highlight the inherent obstacles to achieving universal equality. The uneven distribution of natural assets underscores the fundamental challenge of creating a

level playing field globally.

Men and women's varying physical traits have been deciding gender roles since aeons. Men



EXAM PACK

usually possess a greater muscle mass and type II fibre areas, contributing to their increased strength as compared to women. This makes them perfect fits for roles in military, athletics, labour, etc. These innate traits bestowed by nature form the basis of unequal roles and gender-based disparities. While these traits cannot be changed, it is a prerequisite to eliminate these discrepancies to achieve universal gender equality.

The limitation of material resources hinders the way of equal provision of basic necessities and opportunities, making it difficult to ensure equitable access of goods for all. The WHO and UNICEF have revealed that around 2.2 billion people have no access to clean water. With only 3% of the Earth's water being fresh, equitably distributing such a scarce and limited resource is impractical. This illustrates that achieving global resource equality is exceptionally challenging. From the establishment of "Liberty, Fraternity and Equality" in the French Revolution to the efforts to



against racial discrimination, e.g. Black Lives Matter, bring in more discrimination than equality by highlighting the racial difference from the white race, inadvertently reinforcing divisions.

It may remain impossible to attain universal equality in its own perfect sense, but efforts can be made towards achieving equitable status.

To address disparities, we can introduce targeted support and additional privileges for marginalized communities to help level the playing field. This concept of encouraging the flow of wealth through avenues like charity and zakat helps in eliminating the monopoly of the wealthy class from holding large fortunes. Moreover, community tolerance and accommodation of cultural and religious pluralism should be promoted so that different perceptions can be appreciated and incorporated into the core social values. Embracing and learning to live harmoniously in diverse environments can also contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society. While it is impossible to enshrine absolute

THE MOMENT OF YOUTH

Pakistan's 'youth bulge' is palpable; just over two out of every three Pakistanis today are below the age of 30, and just under one in every three is between 15 and 29 years of age (our definition of youth). The demographic momentum imbedded in this implies that Pakistan is not just a young country; it is going to remain young till at least 2050, possibly longer.

There is the inherent potential of a 'boom' in every youth bulge. A large number of new young entrants into the economy can become motors of consumption, generators of ideas and innovation and harbingers of new social energy.

There is also the equally inherent potential of a 'bust' in every youth bulge. A large number of new entrants into the economy need new employment, can feel suffocated by the lack of room to grow, and can burn with anger when existing systems they wish for are not enabled to change.

Certainly not as simple as it may sound, but the final path taken does depend on the choices made by policy, by society, and by the young themselves.

make a boundaryless state in the form of the USSR, history shows various examples where the efforts to establish complete equality failed and took the lives of many. The French Revolution, which aimed at bringing equality, later led to the reign of terror, causing bloodshed and violence, and Napoleon's dictatorship, where he seized absolute power. The unification of several states under the guise of communism, in the form of the USSR, led to economic stagnation, authoritarianism and finally its dissolution in 1991. Women's rights movements, like the Aurat March in Pakistan, trigger patriarchal mindsets, fuelling misogyny and increasing gender-based violence. The movements

universal equality, these measures, in some way, can go a long way in reducing the disparities that exist and making a world a little fairer.

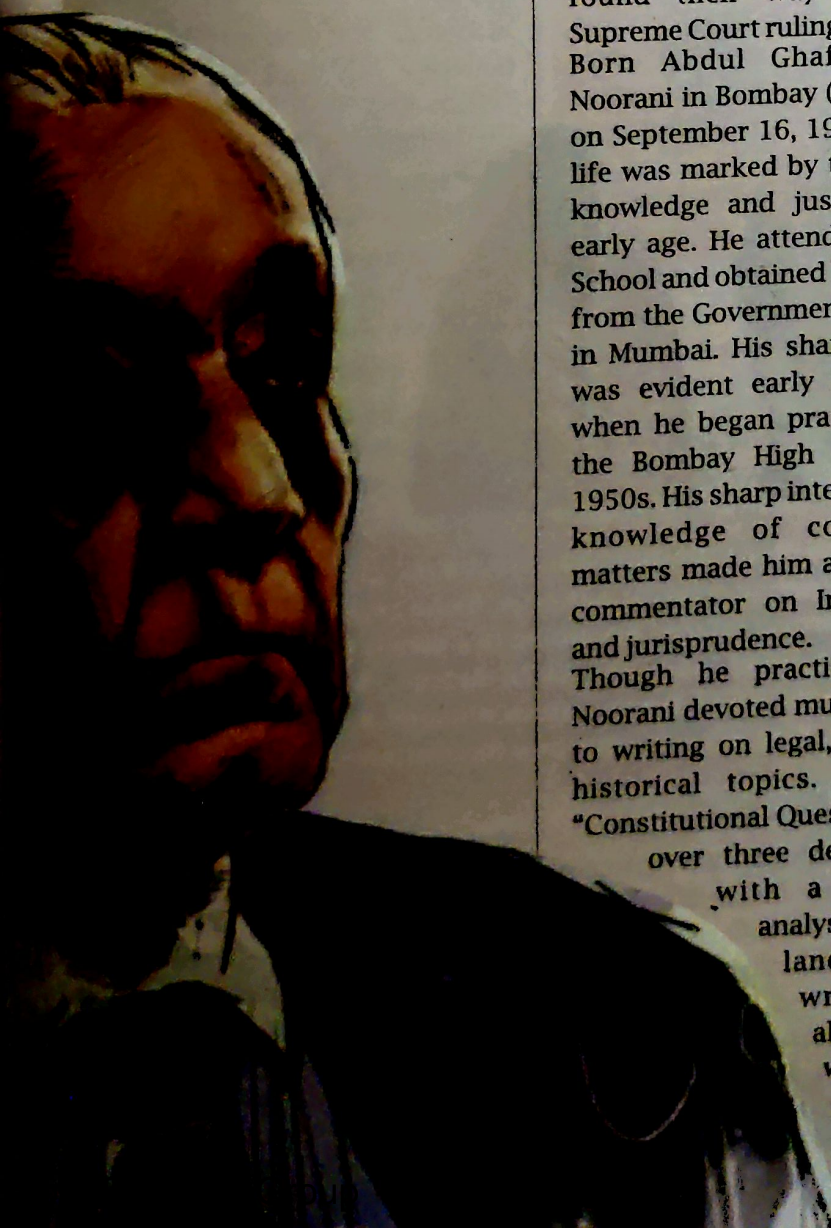
While striving for universal equality, we must recognize that true equality might be a utopian idea owing to inherent disparities, yet practical steps can be taken to reduce the discrepancies. By addressing systemic inequalities through targeted support, wealth redistribution and embracing diversity, we can create a more just and balanced society. ■

The writer is pursuing a Master's degree in Artificial Intelligence from UET, Lahore.

GENERAL

AG Noorani

A scholar of
justice



On August 9, India's renowned scholar, prolific writer, legal luminary and public intellectual Abdul Ghafoor Noorani, better known as AG Noorani, passed away in Mumbai at the age of 96. Equipped with unmatched research skills, Mr Noorani was an institution, a library and an authoritative source. The renowned lawyer was a prolific author who, through his countless newspaper columns, made indelible contributions to legal scholarship and political discourse in India for over six decades. His writings on a varied range of law topics on constitutional matters found their way into Indian Supreme Court rulings.

Born Abdul Ghafoor Majeed Noorani in Bombay (now Mumbai) on September 16, 1930, Noorani's life was marked by the pursuit of knowledge and justice from an early age. He attended St. Mary's School and obtained his law degree from the Government Law College in Mumbai. His sharp legal mind was evident early in his career when he began practising law at the Bombay High Court in the 1950s. His sharp intellect and deep knowledge of constitutional matters made him a sought-after commentator on Indian politics and jurisprudence.

Though he practised law, Mr Noorani devoted much of his time to writing on legal, political and historical topics. His column "Constitutional Questions" ran for over three decades. Along

with a meticulous analysis of the legal landscapes, his writings were always replete with anecdotes that made the most

complex aspects of constitutional law easily accessible. In fact, this careful legal analysis punctuated with anecdotes was a hallmark of his writings. He had perfected the art of weaving in constitutional assembly debates with contemporary political questions, making it impossible for the forces that misrepresented the intent of the founders of the Indian Constitution to defend their political actions.

As an author, Mr Noorani penned over a dozen books on various aspects of Indian constitutional law, politics and history. Some of his notable works include: The Kashmir Question (1964), Ministers' Misconduct (1973), Constitutional Questions and Citizens' Rights (2006) and The RSS: A Menace to India (2019).

Though he never held any official position, Mr Noorani's opinions carried weight in legal and political circles. He was often consulted on constitutional matters and his writings were cited in academic works and even the Supreme Court judgements. While revered in progressive and liberal circles, Mr Noorani was not without his critics. Some felt his views were too idealistic or out of step with changing political realities. Nonetheless, his commitment to constitutional values and rigorous analysis earned him respect across the political spectrum.

Mr Noorani would be particularly missed by the people of Jammu and Kashmir for whom he spoke relentlessly in his books and highly-quoted articles. His book 'The Kashmir Dispute' is a meticulously researched work which records every twist and turn in this vexed issue with irrefutable evidence. ■

The writer is a lawyer.

Ayesha Gill



According to the Pakistan Demographic and Household Survey, 40 percent of girls in Pakistan are married by the time they are 18 years old. Consequently, Pakistan now



Agence France-Presse (AFP) which has revealed that extreme weather has led to a surge in underage marriages in Pakistan. According to the report, 45 underage girls were married off only in Khan Muhammad Mallah village of Dadu in Sindh province. It says that although Pakistan has the unenviable distinction of having one of the highest rates in the world of underage marriages, the scourge is more rampant in Sindh where approaching monsoon and resultant possible floods have made parents get their daughters married "to save them from poverty," usually in exchange for money.

Although the summer monsoon between July and September is vital for the livelihoods of millions of farmers and food security, scientists have been long warning that climate change is making them heavier and longer, raising the risk of landslides, floods and long-term crop damage, which makes people vulnerable to calamities

Extreme weather has upended lives, businesses and economic activities around the globe. But in crisis-hit Pakistan, the situation is far more acute. Amid changing weather patterns, some regions of Pakistan are reporting a sharp rise in the disturbing trend of 'monsoon brides.' According to a recent AFP report, Pakistan is seeing a high rate of underage girls getting married since the 2022 deluge. Many villages in the agricultural belt of Sindh have not recovered from the 2022 floods, which plunged a third of the country underwater, displaced millions and ruined harvests. This has led to this new trend of 'monsoon brides'.

holds the tragic distinction of having the sixth highest number of women married before the age of 18 globally, primarily because the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 set the minimum marriage age in Pakistan at eighteen for boys and sixteen for girls. However, owing to a number of legislative measures, e.g. the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 2014

(Sindh), which set the minimum age limit for both girls and boys at 18 years, Pakistan's high rate of marriages for underage girls had been inching lower in recent years. But after unprecedented floods in 2022, rights workers warned that such weddings were on the rise due to climate-driven economic insecurity. This warning has been materialized by a recent report by

that are hard to cope with. To survive these impending threats, families would resort to using any means or source they could. The first and most obvious way for them is to marry off their daughters so as to save them from floods and also to relieve the economic burden and miseries the floods will bring along. The justifications provided by the

parents for marrying off their daughters, such as saving them from poverty, underscore the urgent need to tackle the underlying socioeconomic challenges that fuel such practices. Poverty and limited opportunities should not serve as excuses for perpetuating underage marriages, and it is imperative for the government to intervene with both carrot and stick in hand to address poverty and punish the men who are effectively buying young girls.

It is also worth noting that climate change is a major factor in the new wave of underage marriages. Almost every recent case of such marriage has involved brides from families that were rendered penniless and homeless by floods and other natural calamities. In many cases, the brides' parents genuinely felt they were doing the girls a favour. And while there has been some

progress in reducing underage marriage, a lot still needs to be done to eliminate the practice and ensure that victims can be rehabilitated. Cultural taboos mean that many victims of child marriage end up with nowhere to go if they leave their spouses. Their families fear being ostracized, and many girls are forced to quit school to get married, meaning they are unlikely to have acquired any skills that could get them gainful employment. Expanding skills training for victims would ensure that they do not end up in poverty, or worse. At the same time, it would also help local economies by making women workers available for small businesses and industries, thus allowing something good to come from something terrible.

It is imperative, therefore, that all provinces make underage marriage prohibition laws, and

implement them, too. Nonetheless, laws alone are not enough. They also need to be backed by actions, such as improving girls' access to education, creation of job opportunities for their families and making people better aware of how harmful underage marriages are for girls.

That may seem like a tall order to our policymakers, given the financial constraints. But it is also a matter of indifference since those most impacted belong to poor and marginalized sections of society. The problem, though, can be seen in its wider perspective, i.e. the effect of a high population growth rate on the national endeavour towards socio-economic progress. Necessary measures are required to be adopted to discourage the prevalence of underage marriages. ■

The writer is a social media enthusiast.

The National Commission on the Rights of the Child

The National Commission on the Rights of the Child (NCRC), a statutory body tasked with promoting and protecting children's rights in accordance with national laws and international conventions like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – which Pakistan has ratified – can play a crucial role in addressing the critical issues of child or underage marriages, a persistent problem in Pakistan, especially in rural areas. The NCRC advocates for the implementation and enforcement of laws like the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, which sets the legal age of marriage at 18 for boys and 16 for girls, but calls for an increase in the legal age for girls to 18 in line with international standards.

The Commission also pushes for the harmonization of child marriage laws across Pakistan, as different provinces have varying legal ages for marriage. For instance, Sindh has set the minimum age for marriage at 18, while other provinces still allow girls to marry at 16. The NCRC runs awareness campaigns to highlight the negative impacts of child marriages on health, education, and the overall development of children, particularly girls. These campaigns often focus on changing societal norms

and educating communities about the importance of delaying marriage until the legal age.

The NCRC works closely with provincial governments, law-enforcement agencies and civil society organizations to monitor and report cases of child marriage. It collaborates with NGOs to ensure that children who are at risk of early marriage or who have already been married off are provided with support, including education, shelter and rehabilitation services. When cases of early marriages are reported, the NCRC intervenes to ensure that the marriage is prevented or annulled and that the child is returned to school. The Commission also provides legal aid and psychological support to children rescued from early marriages.

The NCRC conducts research and gathers data on child marriages to understand the scope and scale of the issue. This research is used to develop policies and recommend reforms to the government.

The NCRC works with international organizations like UNICEF and Save the Children to align Pakistan's policies on child marriage with international standards and to gain technical and financial support for its initiatives.

Zohaib Ahmad

Hopelessness arises when life doesn't go our way. We feel everything is working against us and life will never be better again. The mind drives us into a negative, downward spiral with every new thought. During such times, it is easy to leave activities or routines that could be helpful to us. Instead, we adopt unhealthy habits to cope and fill the void. When faced with various life challenges, we succumb to the difficulty and inevitably get waylaid from our path. We tend to worry and live in fear about what the future holds for us. That worry only wastes our time and energy. It does not solve anything. The key is not to be affected by what is happening

thoughts, still the mind and focus our attention on Allah Almighty, we feel that it has the power to illuminate and transform our lives. We are then bathed in joy and bliss that eclipse any pain we may experience in the outer world. Times may be tough now, but think about the fact that this too shall pass and someday it won't be as hard.

2. Surround yourself with good people

When the chips are down, you need people who are upbeat, enthusiastic and optimistic. These people will hold you up until you stand on your own again. They will root for you, encourage you and support you emotionally and socially. They will not judge you,

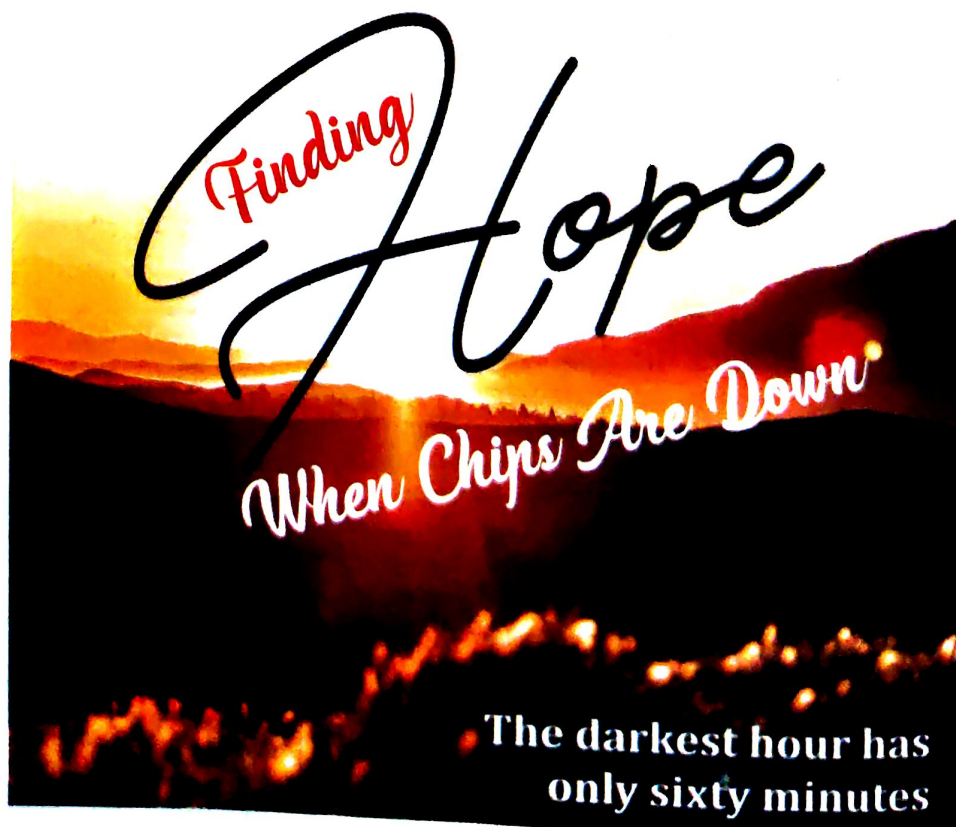
THERE ARE GOING TO BE TIMES IN YOUR LIFE WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN. YOU MAY LOSE A JOB, FAIL AN EXAM, NOT ACHIEVE SOMETHING YOU HAVE WORKED SO HARD FOR, HAVE HEALTH ISSUES OR SUFFER THROUGH THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE. THESE ARE THE TIMES WHEN YOU LOSE ALL HOPES AND WANT TO SECLUDE YOURSELF AS IF NOTHING BETTER WILL HAPPEN AGAIN. BUT, HERE IS SOMETHING INTERESTING TO THINK ABOUT: HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THAT SOME PEOPLE SEEM VERY RESILIENT AND THEY JUST SOMEHOW BOUNCE BACK? THOSE PEOPLE, WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN, STILL SEEM MOTIVATED AND DON'T GIVE UP! WHY? THE ANSWER IS: THEY STAY MOTIVATED AND HOPEFUL. SO, FINDING HOPE WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN IS A CRUCIAL SKILL THAT CAN HELP YOU NAVIGATE THROUGH THE MOST CHALLENGING TIMES. FINDING HOPE IN TIMES OF HOPELESSNESS IS ABOUT TAKING SMALL STEPS AND BEING KIND TO YOURSELF.

around us. We must remember the importance of focusing on the positive, as we face life's challenges. Especially during times of despair, we must work extra hard to keep the habits that will benefit us. Contrary to how we may feel, this is when we need to do the work to tap into our inner strength. We should develop the habit and skills to dig deep into the spiritual lesson hidden within each experience. We must find comfort and solace in tracing our way back to our normal state. So, how can we find comfort in times of hopelessness or when the chips are down?

Here are some ways to stay motivated even when the chips are down.

1. Control your thoughts

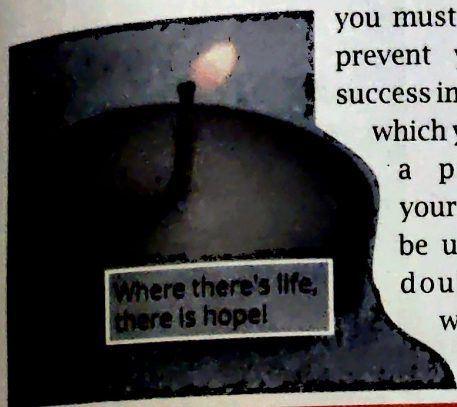
When we learn to control our



but will make you feel better and help you believe in yourself and think that you can dig out of the hole you are in now.

3. Stay focused on your purpose

Reiterate the value of your mission. This underscores your belief that your goal has a purpose. The bumps in the road, or mountains you must cross, cannot prevent your ultimate success in achieving that which you believe has a purpose. For yourself, you may be unsure or even doubtful about what will work in this



"WHEN YOU HAVE EXHAUSTED ALL POSSIBILITIES, REMEMBER THIS: YOU HAVEN'T."

— THOMAS EDISON

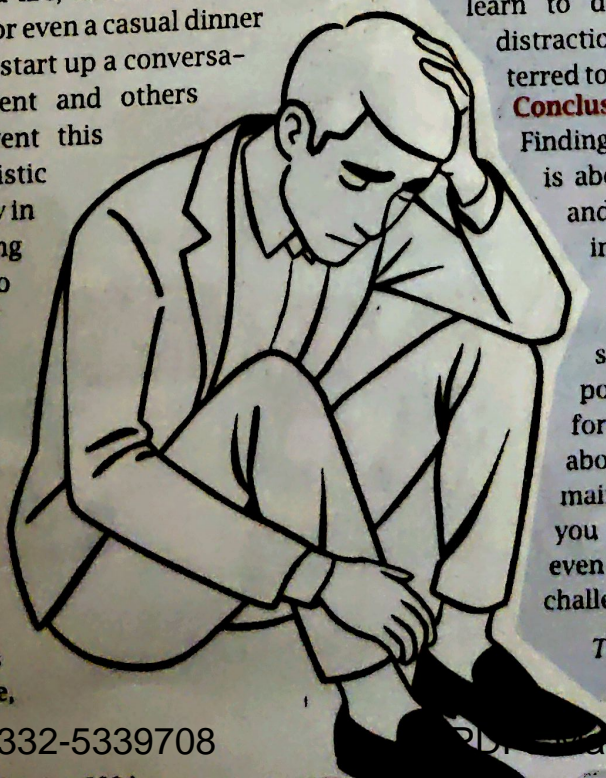
instance. But by setting a tone of positivity and perseverance, you'll reassure those around you. Show others that in spite of the circumstances, you are unstoppable and you'll find yourself lifted by their confidence in you.

4. Accentuate the positive

Human nature dictates a tendency to fixate on the negative. No matter where you are, the office, coffee shop, in line at a grocery store or even a casual dinner party, someone will inevitably start up a conversation or dialogue of discontent and others around chime right in. Prevent this reaction by keeping an optimistic attitude. This will go a long way in motivating you to keep working toward goals and find ways to solve problems instead of complaining and losing hope.

5. Write down new goals

Adversity can be terrible, but it can also give you an opportunity to take a step back and reinvent yourselves and your lives. You can build a new life. Take some time and write down brand new life goals. That's right for every area of your life,



i.e. financial, physical, mental, spiritual, career, family life. These goals will get you excited and help you shift your life in a different direction.

6. Focus on small wins

In the midst of overwhelming situations, finding hope often starts with recognizing and celebrating small victories. These can be as simple as completing a task, learning something new or helping someone in need. Small wins can accumulate and create a sense of progress and achievement.

7. Seek inspiration

Look for stories, books or quotes that inspire you. Learning about others who have overcome adversity can be motivating and remind you that hope and resilience are possible, even in the darkest times.

8. Reflect on past challenges

Remind yourself of past challenges you've overcome. Reflecting on your resilience and strength in those situations can provide hope and confidence that you can handle current difficulties as well.

9. Engage in activities you enjoy

Engage in hobbies or activities that bring you joy and relaxation. Whether it is reading, painting, exercising or spending time in nature, doing something you love can provide a mental break and restore some positivity.

10. Avoid time thieves

Our most precious capital in this world is the time we have been given. Yet, we are surrounded by distractions, attractions and enticement - thieves who compete for our time and deplete our precious capital.

If we want to succeed in our goal, we must learn to develop filters that keep all distractions at bay to continue undeterred toward our spiritual goals.

Conclusion

Finding hope when the chips are down is about taking one step at a time and being kind to yourself. It is important to remember that difficult times are a part of life, and with patience, support and perseverance, it is possible to find hope and move forward. By implementing the above-mentioned strategies and maintaining a positive outlook, you can find hope and strength even when faced with significant challenges. ■

The writer is a member of staff.

August - September' 24

NATIONAL



Aug. 16: The KP provincial government removed Minister for Communications and Works Shakil Ahmad.

Aug. 16: Ateequr Rehman Memon was given the look-after charge of Director General of Pakistan National Accreditation Council.

Aug. 16: The newly commissioned Pakistan Navy Ship (PNS) Hunain, during its maiden voyage from Romania to Pakistan, visited Turkiye and participated in exercise EX TURGUTREIS-X with Turkish Coast Guard ship Gelibolu.

Aug. 16: Pakistan discovered new deposits of oil and gas in Kohat district of KP.

Aug. 16: Nadir Shafi Dar was appointed the Director General of Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority for 90 days.

Aug. 16: Air Vice Marshal Taimur Iqbal was appointed DG Airports Authority for 90 days.

Aug. 17: The KP government removed MNA from Malakand, Junaid Akbar, as the focal person to the chief minister.

Aug. 17: PM Shehbaz Sharif removed the Ministry of Climate Change Secretary Aizaz Aslam Dar.

Aug. 17: Prestigious Tamgha-i-Quaid-e-Azam award was bestowed upon Chinese scientist Liu Xinmin for his outstanding contribution to bilateral relations and

scientific advancement.

Aug. 18: CM Punjab approved the summary for the establishment of 5 new tehsils in Lahore.

Aug. 18: The Punjab government approved the policy giving the persons imprisoned in minor crimes to the disposal of Deputy Commissioners.

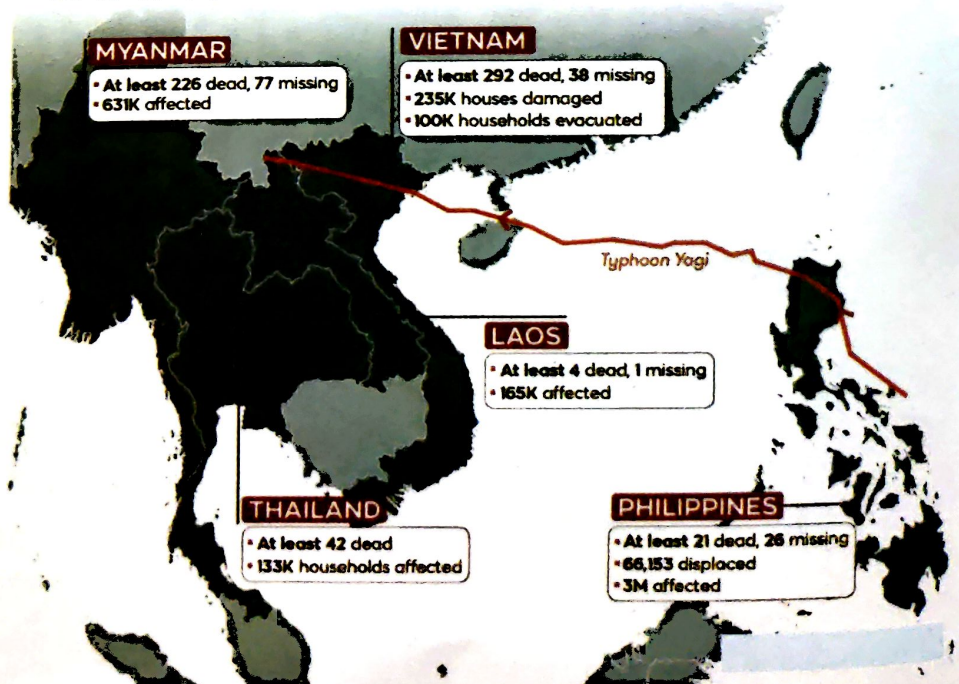
Aug. 20: Pakistan conducted successful training launch of surface-to-surface ballistic missile Shaheen-II.

Aug. 21: Pakistan Army's Major Sania Safdar, who is serving with the United Nations Force in Cyprus

M. Usman Butt

TYPHOON YAGI DEVASTATES SOUTHEAST ASIA

Extreme winds, floods and landslides affect millions across the region



➤ **Zarrar Hasham Khan**

The first federal secretary from the private sector

Zarrar Hasham Khan belongs to Tando Jan Muhammad, a small town in Sindh's Mirpurkhas District. He was born on October 21, 1976. In 1999, he completed his Bachelor's Degree in Engineering from Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute. In 2013, he received a degree from Harvard Business School, Harvard University. In 2014, he completed the Oxford Strategy Leadership Programme from Oxford University and Strategy Implementation Course from London Business School in 2015. In 2020, he did his MBA from University of Warwick, UK. Zarrar Hasham was previously working as Group Chief Business Solutions Officer at Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL). As CBSO, he was responsible for development and delivery of the entire Telecom and IT portfolio for B2B and B2G customers. As head of wholesale business unit, he managed local and international connectivity for voice and data, as well as PTCL's investments in international submarine infrastructure. As Group Chief, he was responsible for Ufone's entire corporate division. Zarrar Hasham worked for 11 years in STC-Kuwait (a Saudi Telecom Group company) as Chief Technology Officer defining strategy and overseeing its execution for Telecom, IT and ICT infrastructure. In that role, he spearheaded one of the largest commercial deployments of 5G services in the world. Zarrar also sat at the Policy Board of SAMENA Telecommunications Council.

became its first peacekeeper to receive the 2023 "Certificate of Recognition" for advocating gender equality.

Aug. 21: The federal government appointed five members of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII).

Aug. 21: Former foreign secretary Dr Asad Majeed Khan assumed office of the ECO secretary general at its headquarters in Tehran.

Aug. 21: Rizwan Saeed, the new ambassador of Pakistan to the US, assumed responsibilities.

Aug. 21: The Election Tribunal de-notified Balochistan Home Minister Mir Zia Langove, declaring him ineligible to hold public office.

Aug. 22: The Supreme Court of Pakistan approved the federal government's appeal to expunge controversial paras from the contentious Mubarak Sani case verdict.

Aug. 22: PMSS launched the Buna-Raast connectivity

project, which would link the payment mechanism with the Arab Monetary Fund's system to facilitate overseas Pakistanis in Arab world to send remittances through a swift, affordable and effective method.

Aug. 22: At least 11 policemen were martyred in an attack by bandits in the Kacha area of Rahim Yar Khan.

Aug. 22: Pakistan's multiple Guinness World Record-holder Irfan Mehsood and his five-year-old son Sufiyan Mehsood broke India's Guinness World Record of the fastest time to climb around a person.

Aug. 23: Pakistan Armed Forces' tri services team won five medals at the 4th CISM (International Military Sports Council) World Military Cadet Games.

Aug. 23: The United Nations asked Pakistan to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Aug. 26: At least 54 people, including 10 soldiers and four law-enforcers, were martyred by terrorists in different districts of Balochistan.

Aug. 26: Iran served its last notice on moving the Paris Arbitration Court against Pakistan for not constructing the pipeline under the IP gas project during the extended 180-day deadline.

Aug. 27: President Zardari conferred Nishan-i-Imtiaz (Military) upon Commander of the Ground Forces of People's Liberation Army of China Gen. Li Qiaoming.

Aug. 27: The historic Bhurban Declaration was signed at the conclusion of the National Policy Dialogue on the Economic Case for Maternal Nutrition.

Aug. 27: The federal cabinet unveiled a new board for the National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC), headed by Dr Fiaz Ahmed Chaudhry.

Aug. 27: The US embassy in Islamabad announced the recipients of \$20,000 in seed grants as part of its 'Academy for Women Entrepreneurs' programme.

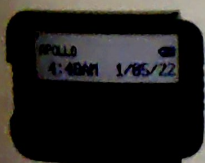
Aug. 28: Moody's Rating Agency upgraded Pakistan's local and foreign currency issuer amid expectations

What is a pager?

A communication device aka beeper

Operated by small batteries

Often used in high level situations



GK CORNER

that the government would be able to lower liquidity and external vulnerability risks further.

Aug. 28: A special committee to oversee the conversion of three major imported coal-based IPPs - Sahiwal, Port Qasim and Hub - to Thar coal was set up.

Aug. 28: The federal government appointed Moazzam Jah Ansari as the new IGP of Balochistan.

Aug. 29: CM Punjab approved the appointment of 25 parliamentary secretaries.

Aug. 29: The National Coordinator for National Counter Terrorism Authority (Nacta) Rai Tahir was removed from his office.

Aug. 29: President Zardari conferred Hilal-i-Imtiaz upon Arshad Nadeem and also announced Rs100 million reward for the athlete.

Aug. 30: PMSS accepted the resignation of Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Dr Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan and gave the charge to Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal with immediate effect.

Aug. 30: The Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) selected ten officers from the armed forces for civil service after interviews and psychological tests.

Aug. 30: PMSS approved the transfer of National Engineering Services Pakistan (Nespak) from the Power Division to the Cabinet Division.

Sept. 01: President Zardari approved the appointment of 12 scientists on the Board of Trustees of Pakistan Science Foundation for a period of three years.

Sept. 01: PMSS approved the formation of a selection board for the contract appointment of Secretary Information Technology and Telecommunication Division through open market.

Sept. 01: US President Joseph R. Biden conferred lifetime achievement award with medal to president Urdu Center New York, writer and poet Raies Warsi in recognition of his life-long commitment to building a strong nation through volunteer services.

Sept. 02: The government decided to designate the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP), the Small and

Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) and the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) as essential SOEs.

Sept. 02: FBR Chairman Rashid Mahmood Langrial appointed Pakistan Customs Service officer Muhammad Junaid Jalil Khan, Chief Collector of Customs Enforcement South Karachi, as the new member of FBR Customs Operations immediately.

Sept. 03: Balochistan National Party (BNP-M) chief Sardar Akhtar Mengal resigned as the National Assembly Member over the "worsening situation" in the province.

Sept. 03: PMSS approved the appointment of Zarrar Hasham Khan as Secretary Information Technology and Telecom Division - It is for the first time that a professional from the private sector has been appointed to a Grade-22 post.

Sept. 03: The federal government introduced and implemented the Contributory Pension Scheme with effect from July 1, 2024.

Sept. 03: A joint venture involving Pearl Continental Hotels, Warm Waters Advisory Group, Platinum Construction Limited, and Golfscape LDA Portugal acquired the lease of Lahore's Royal Palm Golf & Country Club for 25 years.

Sept. 03: The federal government appointed Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi, Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as a member of the FPSC.

Sept. 03: Bangladesh inflicted a crushing six-wicket defeat on Pakistan at the Pindi Stadium to sweep the World Test Championship (WTC) series 2-0.

Sept. 03: The country's consumer inflation dropped to single digit after a period of 34 months.

Sept. 03: The federal cabinet endorsed the signing of the Trade Framework Agreement between Pakistan and Mercosur, a South American trade bloc comprising Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Sept. 04: The federal government appointed Lt. Gen. Akhtar Nawaz Satti as FPSC chairman. He will take

Solution to Katcha Problem

After the deadly attack on policemen in Rahim Yar Khan, which claimed the lives of 12 personnel, the decades-old issue of bandits in the katcha area has once again come into the spotlight and there are renewed calls for a comprehensive solution to this issue. One proposed approach involves disarming the local inhabitants and transforming the region into a food basket through the introduction of corporate farming, similar to the efforts of Sir John Jacob, the founder of the city of Jacobabad.

When Sir Jacob arrived in the area of Khangarh (Sindh), a village then and Jacobabad district now, in 1841, it was under the grip of lawlessness. He engaged the hostile tribes by offering them employment in the development of their own area, including digging canals and constructing roads and buildings. This strategy played a pivotal role in restoring peace and prosperity to the region.

Dilemma of Katcha area of Rahim Yar Khan and Rujhan Mazari (in Rajanpur district) has been existing since long despite launching of several large-scale operations and intelligence-based operations by law enforcement agencies. At least 40,000 acres of land of riverine area of Rujhan Mazari is under the control of gangsters of at least six gangs - Lound, Dullani, Sikhani, Lathani, Umerani and Bangyani. They live there with their families and do farming in their respective areas.

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charge of the post after his retirement from the army.

Sept. 04: The Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) announced its official membership in the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC).

Sept. 05: CM Punjab inaugurated the country's first and largest primary school nutrition programme.

Sept. 05: The Oxford Union President Israr Khan Kakar was appointed as Pakistan's Ambassador-at-Large for Youth Empowerment.

Sept. 06: The government banned six major expenditure items under its austerity drive to cut down non-development expenditures.

Sept. 06: The SCP restored the amendments made to the National Accountability Ordinance (NAO) 1999, setting aside the earlier judgment that declared some of the amendments as unconstitutional.

Sept. 06: Tokyo Olympics gold medallist Haider Ali won a bronze medal in the Paris Paralympics discus throw (F-37 category) event.

Sept. 06: The SBP cancelled the licence of Industrial Development Bank Limited (IDBL) following its liquidation.

Sept. 07: Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong became the first Chinese ambassador to visit an operational nuclear power plant in Pakistan.

Sept. 07: Two hectares of land in the Kotana village of Baghpat in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh linked to former president Pervez Musharraf were auctioned for INR1.38 crore. It was declared enemy property in 2010 under regulations managing assets of Pakistani nationals in India.

Sept. 09: The federal cabinet approved the abolition of around 150,000 posts in the federal government besides allowing amendments to the Army Act to give financial package to employees affected by the regime's rightsizing exercise.

Sept. 10: The Federal Judicial Academy and Unicef signed an MoU to collaborate on accelerating justice within the child rights agenda in Pakistan.

Digital Inclusion

Pakistan can be an odd place. Here, high functionaries of the state can with a straight face hold forth on issues such as access to the internet, while the administration implements policies that are diametrically opposed to the matters being pontificated about. Take, for instance, the ongoing internet slowdown. Speaking at a conference recently, Senate Chairman Yousuf Raza Gilani observed that Pakistan believes in 'digital inclusion' whereby technology can serve as a 'catalyst for equitable and sustainable growth'. He claimed that 50pc of the population in the region lacked internet access, which was 'hindering true progress and development'. These are wise words uttered by the Senate chairman. But did he stop to reflect on the fact that it is the government that has, of recent, been trying its best to champion digital exclusion in Pakistan? Activists and common citizens have for weeks been raising their voices against the throttling of the internet by the state, supposedly to control the flow of information. Mr Gilani spoke of the fact that Pakistan is a 'significant contributor' to the global freelance economy. Yet the reality is that the slowdown has been negatively affecting online businesses and freelancers in the country. At a time when Pakistan needs every dollar it can get to shore up its fragile economy, the state's policies are driving away both investors and our brightest minds. When asked, state functionaries have come up with a variety of confused excuses: the overuse of VPNs is responsible; there are problems in the submarine cables; upgrades in the 'web management system' have slowed down the internet, etc. Rights groups, such as Amnesty International, have called for transparency in the use of surveillance technology in cyberspace, warning against 'unnecessary [and] disproportionate' measures. If the state is serious about digital inclusion, and wants to attract the best tech talent to the country, then an internet free of 'firewalls' is essential.

Sept. 10: Pakistan launched the transformative Recharge Pakistan project, aimed at building climate resilience in communities vulnerable to worsening floods, heatwaves and droughts.

Sept. 10: Malik Shoaib Awan was elected as the new Chairman of the Punjab Education Foundation (PEF).

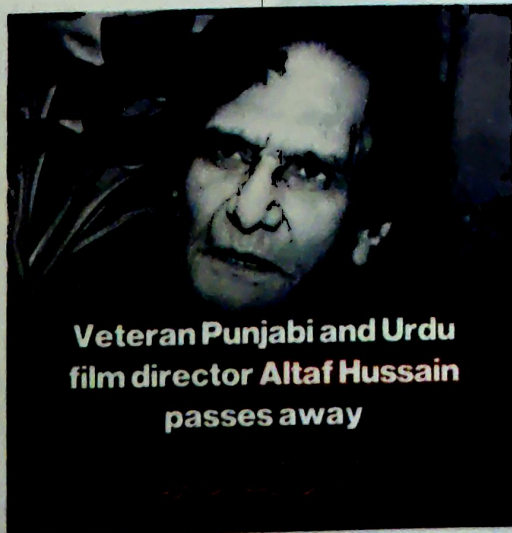
Sept. 10: US Congressman Alexander N. Green was awarded the Sitara-e-Khidmat by Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Rizwan Saeed Sheikh.

Sept. 10: President Zardari increased the number of judges of Peshawar High Court, from 20 to 30 including its chief justice.

Sept. 10: The Sindh government approved 12 innovative crop varieties, including cotton, wheat, mustard and ber, developed by the province's leading agricultural scientists.

Sept. 11: NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq suspended sergeant-at-arms Ishaq Ashraf - the security in

charge of the lower house - in addition to four low-ranking officials 'for not resisting' the entry of unauthorised people.



Veteran Punjabi and Urdu film director Altaf Hussain passes away

Pakistan's Trade Dynamics

Pakistan made up around 0.13 percent of global trade in 2022, showing a gradual decline from previous decades. In contrast, the trade share of its neighbouring economies, India and Bangladesh, has been steadily increasing. India held a larger share, about 2.5 percent, in 2022, reflecting its rapidly growing economy and global presence. Bangladesh also saw an increase, reaching 0.24 percent of global exports in 2022, driven largely by its dominant textile industry. Looking at the historical progression of global trade shares for these countries, it is notable that in 1990, Pakistan's share was around 0.16 percent, India's was 0.5 percent, and Bangladesh's was about 0.06 percent. By 2000, Pakistan's trade share remained similar, while India's share grew to approximately 0.7 percent and Bangladesh saw a slight increase. In 2010, India's trade share surged to over 1.5 percent, while Pakistan experienced minimal growth, and Bangladesh continued its ascent, particularly in textile exports. By 2020, India's trade share expanded further to nearly 2.2 percent, Bangladesh exceeded 0.2 percent, while Pakistan's share remained stagnant. The latest data for 2023 shows India's trade share at 2.5 percent, Bangladesh at 0.24 percent, and Pakistan's at around 0.13 percent.

At one time, textiles dominated Indian exports, but the sector now accounts for only 6.0 percent of global trade. India's leap forward came with diversification into software, pharmaceuticals, auto parts, and gems and jewellery, establishing it as an emerging player in global markets. In contrast, Pakistan has failed to diversify its exports across different sectors. Our pharmaceutical and software exports have progressed only through the efforts of individual entrepreneurs. Even in textiles, our product range is limited, and we have missed out on the blended textile market. More than 50 percent of our exports go to the US and the EU, and we have not explored new markets, even in textiles. Bangladesh, a late entrant in textiles, serves many more destinations than Pakistan.

Sept. 12: The federal cabinet approved directives for all government agencies to ensure that 50 percent of their imports are accessed through the Gwadar Port.

Sept. 12: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) trade ministers met in Islamabad.

Sept. 13: The ADB approved a \$320 million loan to support the rehabilitation and improve climate-resilience, safety of roads in KP.

Sept. 13: Pakistan secured 18th position in the fifth

World Nomad Games with three bronze medals.

Sept. 13: The federal government increased the interest rate for the loans of the provinces and departments to 17.84%.

Sept. 13: Ambassador Asif Ali Durrani, Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan, stepped down.

Sept. 13: Ali Tahir, a BS 21 PAS officer was appointed Secretary, National Food Security and Research Division.

Interphase
DNA is replicated,
cell prepares for
mitosis.

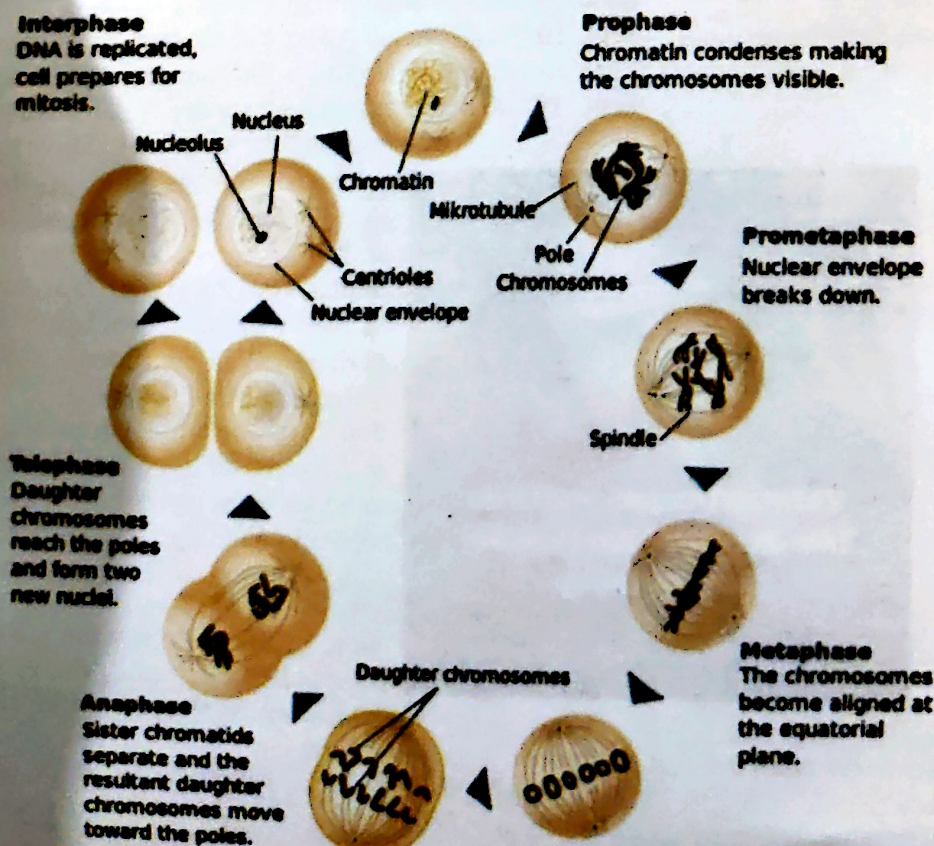
Prophase
Chromatin condenses making
the chromosomes visible.

Prometaphase
Nuclear envelope
breaks down.

Metaphase
The chromosomes
become aligned at
the equatorial
plane.

Telophase
Daughter
chromosomes
reach the poles
and form two
new nuclei.

Anaphase
Sister chromatids
separate and the
resultant daughter
chromosomes move
toward the poles.



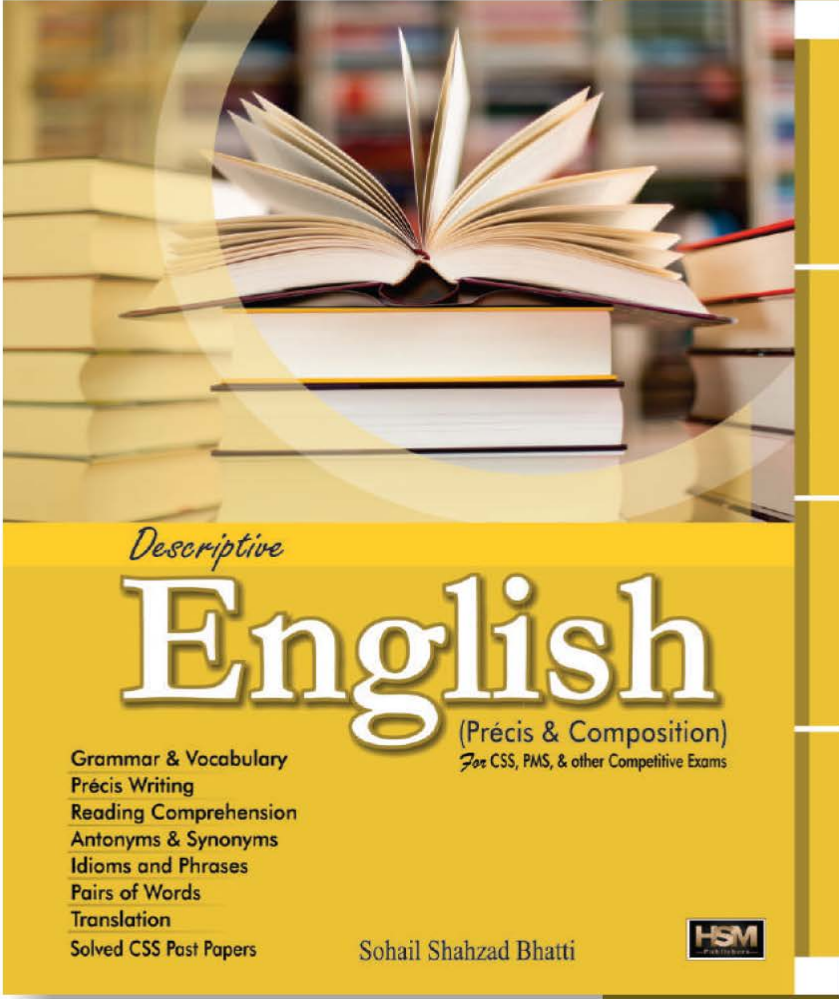
Sept. 13: PMSS appointed 20 MNAs as parliamentary secretaries for different ministries and divisions.

Sept. 14: The SCP directed the ECP to implement in letter and spirit its judgment, delivered on July 12 on reserved seats.

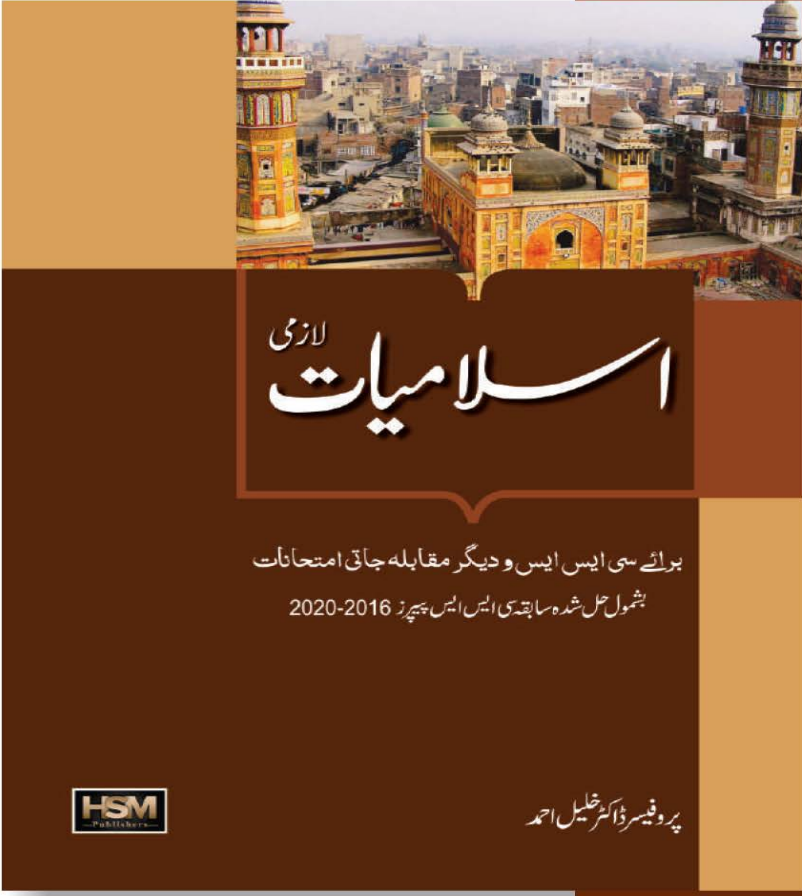
Sept. 14: CM Punjab directed placing a ban on the export of raw pink salt.

Sept. 14: CM Sindh inaugurated Khudee, Pakistan's first café staffed by differently abled persons.

Sept. 15: The government enforced the Essential Services Act for the employees of all Pakistan power sector entities, including distribution companies' (Discos), generation companies (Gencos) and National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC), for six months from July 27, 2024.



For Order:
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For Order:
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INTERNATIONAL

Aug. 16: South Korea's capital broke a century-old weather record with the 26th so-called tropical night in a row - with the temperature above 25°C.

Aug. 16: Paetongtarn Shinawatra, the 37-year-old daughter of billionaire Thaksin Shinawatra, became Thailand's prime minister, becoming the youngest leader in country's history. She is the second woman premier after her aunt Yingluck Shinawatra and the third member of the influential Shinawatra family to lead the country.

Aug. 17: The interim government of Bangladesh recalled ambassadors from six countries and also the high commissioner to the Maldives.

Aug. 18: French film legend Alain Delon died at the age of 88.

Aug. 19: The United States and South Korea kicked off their major annual joint military drills - Ulchi Freedom Shield.

Aug. 20: The world's oldest person, Spain's Maria Branyas Morera, who was born in the United States and lived through two world wars, died at the age of 117.

Aug. 21: Iran's parliament approved reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian's proposed cabinet.

Aug. 21: Iran's investigation into the May helicopter crash that killed president Ebrahim Raisi found it was caused by bad weather and overloading.

Aug. 21: The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) named ex-skipper Faruque Ahmed as president.

Aug. 22: Afghanistan's Taliban-led foreign ministry appointed Mawlawi Badreddin Haqqani as its first accredited ambassador to the UAE, the second country to accept an envoy at that level, after China.

Aug. 22: Afghanistan's Taliban authorities announced the codification of laws detailing rules of behaviour and lifestyle based on their strict interpretation of Islamic law.

Aug. 22: Sri Lanka's top court found President Ranil Wickremesinghe guilty of "unlawful conduct" for indefinitely delaying local polls.

Aug. 22: A massive 2,492-carat diamond, the second largest in the world, was discovered in Botswana.

Aug. 23: Britain announced expansion of the e-Visa system to include new biometric customers,

transitioning from physical documents to an online immigration status.

Aug. 24: Flamboyant Indian batsman Shikhar Dhawan announced his retirement from cricket.

Aug. 24: Russia and Ukraine exchanged 115 prisoners of war from each side.

Aug. 25: The UAE achieved a major milestone as it hit an all-time high of Dh1.395 trillion in non-oil foreign trade.

Aug. 25: Kuwait named Nora Suleiman Al-Fassam and Khalifa Abdullah Ajeel as its new finance and trade ministers respectively.

Aug. 25: Tunisian President Kais Saied replaced various ministers, including from the foreign and defence portfolios.

Aug. 25: Bangladesh claimed their first ever win against Pakistan in their 24-year Test history.

Aug. 25: Telegram chief executive Pavel Durov was arrested in France for offences related to his popular messaging app.

Aug. 26: North Korea unveiled a new "suicide drone".

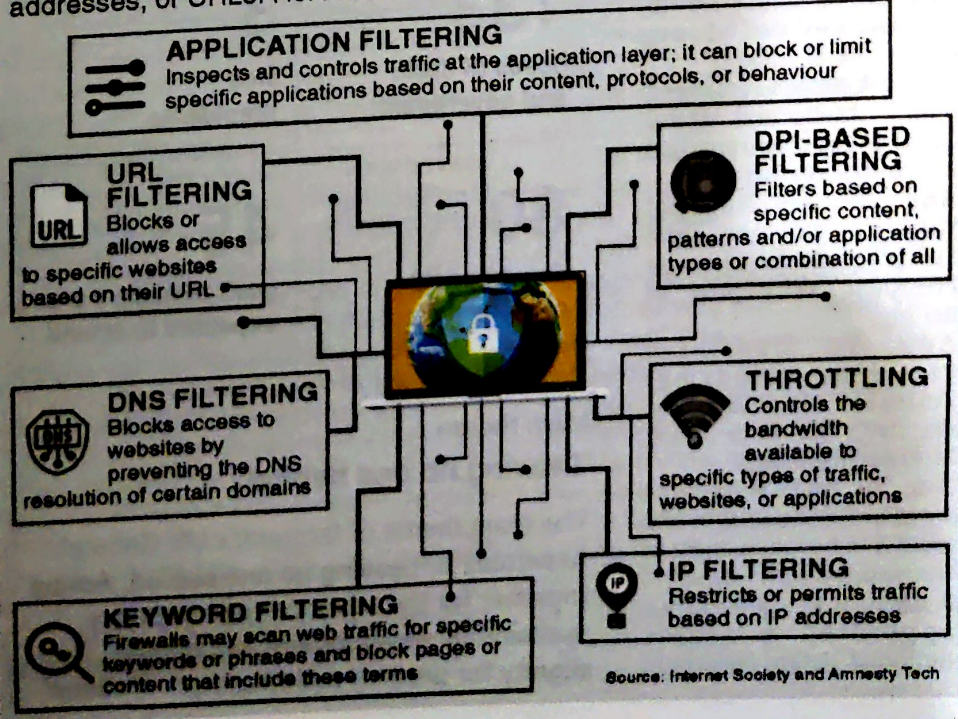
Aug. 26: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian named Abdolkarim Hosseinzadeh, a politician from the Sunni minority, as his vice president for rural development.

Aug. 26: Australia gave millions of workers the legal right to "disconnect," allowing them to ignore unreasonable out-of-hours calls, emails and texts from their bosses.

Aug. 27: Michael Sparks, a factory supervisor who was the first rioter to enter the US Capitol during the

CONTENT BLOCKING TECHNIQUES

Government-installed firewalls work by controlling and restricting access to certain websites and online content, including specific keywords, IP addresses, or URLs. Here are some of the ways they work:



GK CORNER

Educational inequality in Pakistan

Despite education being universally recognized as a fundamental human right, Pakistan's educational system is deeply marred by disparities related to gender, socioeconomic status, geography and religion. In Pakistan, access to quality education is often a privilege determined by wealth and location. Urban centers enjoy modern facilities and ample resources, while rural areas struggle with dilapidated infrastructure and a lack of qualified teachers. The statistics are stark: with 26.2 million children out of school, Pakistan ranks second globally for the highest number of such children. Punjab, with 11.73 million out-of-school children, and Balochistan, where 65% of children are not in school, starkly illustrate this regional divide. Gender inequality further adds to these disparities. In conservative communities, girls frequently face obstacles to higher education, stunting their potential and impeding national progress. Comparing Pakistan's educational system to its South Asian neighbors reveals a glaring disparity. Countries like Sri Lanka and Nepal have achieved notable educational outcomes through sustained investment in infrastructure and teacher training. Sri Lanka's high literacy rate and Nepal's targeted community-based reforms provide valuable models. India and Bhutan have made impressive strides by focusing on holistic development and equitable resource distribution. In contrast, Pakistan faces significant educational disparities, lower literacy rates, and uneven resource allocation, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive reforms. Educational inequality in Pakistan is a multifaceted issue requiring immediate, focused intervention. Addressing the root causes through targeted policies and community engagement can help build a more inclusive education system, laying the foundation for a prosperous and equitable society where every child has the opportunity to realize their full potential.

January 6, 2021, attack on Congress by Donald Trump supporters was sentenced to 53 months in prison.

Aug. 27: India's cricket chief Jay Shah was elected unopposed as chairman of the ICC.

Aug. 28: Afghanistan's Taliban government banned mixed martial arts, believing it to be un-Islamic.

Aug. 28: Bangladesh's new authorities lifted a ban on the country's largest Islamist party, Jamaat-e-Islami.

Aug. 28: The UNSC unanimously voted to extend a long-running peacekeeping mission in Lebanon for another year.

Aug. 28: England's Dawid Malan retired from international cricket.

Aug. 29: India's renowned public intellectual Abdul Ghafoor (AG) Noorani died in Mumbai. He was 96.

Aug. 29: US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing.

Aug. 30: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky dismissed the country's air force chief, Mykola Oleshchuk.

Aug. 30: Brazil's supreme court ordered social media giant X to be taken down in the country.

Aug. 31: Türkiye appointed a senior diplomat Irfan Neziroglu

as its ambassador to Pakistan.

Aug. 31: Joe Root set an England record of 34 Test centuries.

Sept. 02: Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev's party won snap parliamentary elections.

Sept. 02: The United States seized Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's plane in the Dominican Republic and flew it to Florida.

Sept. 02: Electric car sales in Norway took a 94-percent share of the market in August - a new world record.

Sept. 03: The Indian state of West Bengal passed a law that could lead to the execution of rapists.

Sept. 03: Spain appointed Isabel Perello as the country's top judge, making her the first woman to run the Supreme Court.

Sept. 03: Italian sprinter Valentina Petrillo became the first openly transgender athlete to compete in a Paralympics.

Sept. 05: The UAE announced the completion of the Arab world's first nuclear power plant - Abu Dhabi's Barakah Nuclear Energy Plant.

Sept. 05: During a two-day visit by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the city-state of Singapore,

79th General Assembly

At the UN General Assembly

133

heads of state
and government

3

vice
presidents

80

deputy prime
ministers

45

gov't ministers are
expected to attend

Main theme

'Leaving no one behind'

The main theme of this year's UN General Assembly is 'Leaving no one behind: Acting together for the advancement of peace, sustainable development and human dignity for present and future generations'

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the two countries signed agreements to cultivate talent in chip design and manufacturing and facilitate Singaporean tech investment in India.

Sept. 05: South Korea recorded its highest average summertime temperature since such records began half a century ago.

Sept. 05: Bangladesh's elections chief Kazi Habibur Awal and the country's four other election commissioners all tendered their resignations.

Sept. 05: At the China-Africa forum in Beijing, Chinese leader Xi Jinping pledged over \$50 billion in financing for Africa over the next three years.

Sept. 06: China stopped foreign adoptions of its children, overturning a more than three-decade rule that was rooted in its once strict one-child policy.

Sept. 06: Cristiano Ronaldo scored the 900th goal of his remarkable career.

Sept. 06: New Zealand's Maori chiefs anointed a 27-year-old queen Nga wai hono i te po as their new monarch.

Sept. 06: Boeing's Starliner spacecraft landed uncrewed in a New Mexico desert late, capping a three-month test mission.

Sept. 07: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan called on Islamic countries to form an alliance against what he called 'the growing threat of expansionism' from

Israel.

Sept. 08: England's World Cup-winner Moeen Ali retired from international cricket.

Sept. 08: Aryna Sabalenka won the US Open to claim her third Grand Slam crown.

Sept. 08: The UK government asked the Afghanistan embassy to shut down its diplomatic mission.

Sept. 08: Algeria's incumbent President Abdelmadjid Tebboune was re-elected with almost 95% of the vote.

Sept. 08: Iraq and the US agreed on a phased pullout of the US-led anti-jihadist coalition.

Sept. 09: Jannik Sinner became the first Italian man to win the US Open.

Sept. 09: India and the UAE signed a nuclear cooperation agreement in New Delhi.

Sept. 10: SpaceX launched its historic Polaris Dawn mission - an audacious orbital expedition that will catapult civilians into a high-radiation region of space and see them attempt the first-ever spacewalk by non-professional astronauts.

Sept. 10: Western powers announced fresh sanctions on Iran for supplying Russia with short-range missiles for imminent use against Ukraine.

Sept. 11: The Asian Cricket Council (ACC) announced the launch of the Women's Under-19 T20 Asia Cup.

Sept. 11: Iran and Iraq signed more than a dozen

GK Tidbits

1. The current Chairman of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is: **Lt. Gen. Inam Nader Malik**

2. Mpox, formerly known as monkeypox, was first detected in humans in 1970 in: **DR Congo**

3. The Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University, the only women's university in Balochistan, is located in: **Quetta**

4. The oldest planned city in the world is: **Mehrgarh (Balochistan)**

5. The river that was originally known as Iravati is: **Ravi**

6. Pakistan and Bangladesh played their first Test in: **2001**

7. Anwar Sadat was a president of: **Egypt**

8. World Photography Day is celebrated on: **August 19**

9. The first mpox case in Pakistan was discovered in: **Mardan**

10. Allama Iqbal Open University was established in: **May 1974**

11. The gas that most stars burn in is: **Hydrogen**

12. The brightest star in the sky is: **Sirius**

13. The Economic Cooperation Organisation is headquartered in: **Tehran**

14. UN Department for Peace Operations is headquartered in: **New York**

15. The UN's "Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award" was created in: **2018**

16. Gaborone is the capital of: **Botswana**

17. The concept of narcissism was first introduced by: **Sigmund Freud**

18. The capital and largest city of Venezuela is: **Caracas**

19. The first Pakistani to represent the nation in Wimbledon was: **Ahmad Hasan Khokhar (1948)**

20. Napoleon was exiled to the Mediterranean island of: **Elba**

21. The Paralympic movement dates back to: **1948**

22. The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in: **1996**

23. The United States conducted the world's first successful nuclear weapons test in: **July 1945**

24. Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's tallest mountain, is situated in: **Tanzania**

25. World Organ Donation Day is celebrated on: **August 13**

26. The world's first carbon removal bond to fund Amazon reforestation has been issued by: **The World Bank**

27. The Great Smog of 1952 took place in: **London**

28. The youngest chairman of the International Cricket Council, to date, is: **Jay Shah**

29. The UN Interim Force in Lebanon was established in: **1978**

30. The country that is called the world's call centre capital is: **The Philippines**

31. Blue Origin was founded by: **Jeff Bezos**

32. The world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases is: **China**

33. The Karoonjhar mountain range is located in: **Sindh**

34. The cyclone that recently caused massive rains in Karachi was named: **Asna**

35. The first printing press in the

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agreements to deepen already strong ties.

Sept. 11: Mexico became the world's first country to allow voters to elect judges at all levels.

Sept. 12: Veteran leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Sitaram Yechury, passed away.

Sept. 12: Former Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori died at 86.

Sept. 12: The US State Department imposed sanctions on a Chinese research institute and several companies that it said have been involved in supplying Pakistan's ballistic missile program.

Sept. 12: A pioneering private crew made history by becoming the first civilians to perform spacewalks, marking a giant leap forward for the commercial space industry.

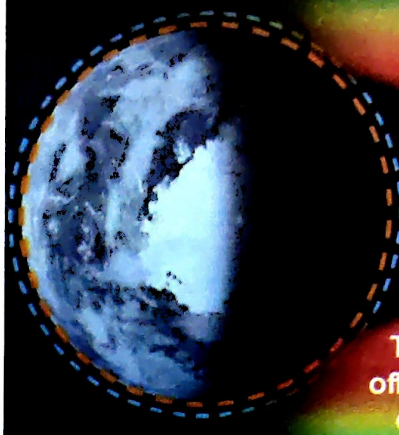
Sept. 13: For the first time in Bangladesh's history, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's death anniversary was commemorated in Dhaka.

Sept. 13: The WHO approved the MVA-BN vaccine as the first vaccine against mpox to be added to its prequalification list.

Sept. 13: The Dutch city of The Hague became the first in the world to pass local

WHY DOES THE MOON TURN RED?

During a full eclipse, the moon is fully in Earth's shadow. At the same time, a little bit of light reaches the moon through parts of Earth's atmosphere. As sunlight passes through Earth's atmosphere, the green to violet portion of the light spectrum is filtered out; the reddish portion of the spectrum is least affected.



The moon bounces off this light and takes on a reddish glow.

GK Tidbits

Punjab was established by missionaries in: **Ludhiana**

36. The real name of Punjabi classic poet Baba Bulleh Shah was: **Syed Abdullah Shah Qadri**

37. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was born in: **1817**

38. The Pakistan Science Foundation Act was enforced in: **1973**

39. International Literacy Day is observed on: **September 8**

40. Spain's Supreme Court was founded in: **1812**

41. The world's first human-to-human heart transplant operation was performed by: **Christiaan Neethling Barnard**

42. Pakistan celebrates Air Force Day on: **September 7**

43. Dr. Barnard transplanted the heart of accident victim Denise Darvall into the chest of 54-year-old Louis Washkansky on: **3 December 1967**

44. The 1965 Indo-Pak War ended on: **23 September 1965**

45. The Tashkent Agreement between Pakistan and India was

signed on: **10 January 1966**

46. The first chairman of the Federal Public Service Commission was: **Mian Afzal Hussain (1947)**

47. The Darien Gap is located between Colombia and: **Panama**

48. China first opened its doors to international adoption of its children in: **1992**

49. The Karachi Nuclear Power Plants K-2 and K-3 began generating electricity in May 2021 and: **April 2022**

50. Pakistan has lost all matches in a home Test series only: **Twice**

51. International Civil Aviation Organization is headquartered in: **Montreal (Canada)**

52. The 330-metre Eiffel Tower was designed by: **Gustave Eiffel**

53. The current Speaker of the US House of Representatives is: **Mike Johnson**

54. The World Suicide Prevention Day is observed annually on: **September 10**

55. The current Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP)

Chairperson is: **Senator Rubina Khalid**

56. The Geneva Conventions were adopted in: **1949**

57. The number of treaties the Geneva Conventions consist of is: **Four**

58. Venison is the meat of: **Deer**
59. The Contract Labour (Regulation) Act was promulgated in: **1970**

60. Sao Paulo, the largest city in South America, is in: **Brazil**

61. Quaid-i-Azam penned his last will on May 30, 1939 in: **Bombay**

62. The Quaid-i-Azam House in Karachi was formerly known as: **Flagstaff House**

63. The United States invaded Iraq on: **March 20, 2003**

64. The abandoned 1970 Test match that gave birth to one-day international cricket was between Australia and: **England**

65. Venezuela is a former colony of: **Spain**

66. The number of countries with a federal system in the world is: **28**

67. International Day of Democracy is observed on: **September 15**

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laws banning advertisements for fossil fuels, petrol cars and long-distance air travel.

Sept. 13: The fifth World Nomad Games ended in Astana (Kazakhstan).

Sept. 13: China's top legislative body approved a proposal to raise the country's retirement age for men to 63 years old from 60, while for women in white collar work it would be raised to 58 years from 55.

Sept. 14: Moscow and Kyiv swapped 103 prisoners of war each in a deal brokered by the UAE.

Sept. 14: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and US President Joe Biden met in Washington

Sept. 14: Iran blasted its new Chamran-1 research satellite into orbit.

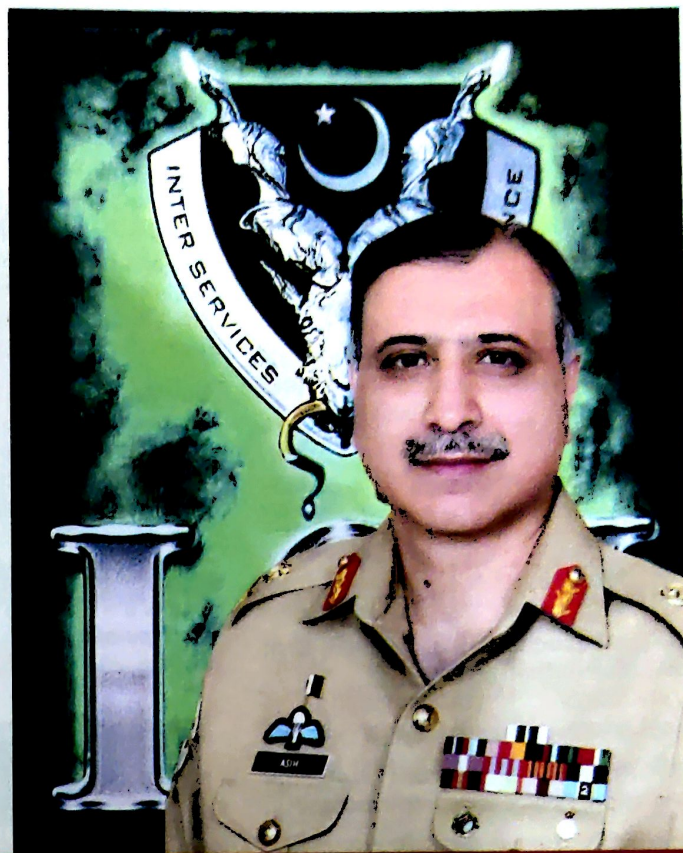
Sept. 15: The SpaceX Polaris Dawn mission, which made history when its crew conducted the first spacewalk by non-government astronauts, splashed down off the coast of Florida.

Sept. 15: Novelist Elias Khoury, one of Lebanon's most renowned writers, died at 76.

Sept. 15: Jordan's King Abdullah II nominated his chief of staff Jafar Hassan as the new prime minister.

Sept. 15: Iran announced to deport two million Afghan migrants in six months.

Sept. 15: Houthis attacked central Israel with a hypersonic ballistic missile.



GK Tidbits

68. The printing press was invented by Johannes Gutenberg in 1454 in: **Germany**

69. The first Quran in Arabic was printed by a Venetian printer, Alessandro Paganini, in 1537-38 in: **Italy**

70. Cascais is a famous coastal resort town in: **Portugal**

71. A nation of 1,192 tiny coral islands in the Indian Ocean scattered across the equator is: **The Maldives**

72. Syed Sulaiman Nadvi completed the Seeratun Nabi left incomplete by: **Shibli Noman**

73. The name of the plane that dropped atomic bomb on Hiroshima was: **Enola Gay**

74. Lord Mayo was assassinated by Sher Ali Afridi, a former Afghan soldier, on: **8 February 1872**

75. The Motto of Olympic Games is: **Citius, Altius, Fortius**

76. The place of worship for Jews is called: **Synagogue**

77. Hindu Mahasabha was founded by Madan Mohan Malviya in: **1915**

78. The period of the Great

Mughals began in: **1526**

79. The head of the International Court of Justice is called: **President**

80. Pakistan purchased Gwadar from: **Oman**

81. The smallest country of the world is: **Vatican City**

82. The Pakistan Essential Services (Maintenance) Act was enforced in: **1952**

83. The world's first constitutional court was established in Austria in: **1919**

84. The All-India Muhammadan Educational Conference was founded in 1886 by: **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan**

85. Izmir is a port city in: **Turkiye**

86. The world's largest port is: **Port of Shanghai**

87. China became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) on: **11 December 2001**

88. The Partition of Bengal was annulled in: **1911**

89. Osama bin Laden was killed in an operation named: **Neptune Spear**

90. The only woman who got two Nobel Prizes is: **Marie Curie**

91. Nandana Fort is situated in: **Jhelum**

92. The first President of the Constituent Assembly was: **Quaid-i-Azam**

93. The author of "A Leadership Odyssey: Muslim Separatism and the Achievement of the Separate State of Pakistan" is: **Sikandar Hayat**

94. The number of the African Great Lakes is: **Seven**

95. The first practical telephone was patented by: **Alexander Graham Bell**

96. Abdur Rahman Chughtai is famous for: **Painting**

97. The brain of a computer is: **CPU**

98. The first UN Secretary General was: **Trygve Lie**

99. Dyslexia is an impaired ability to learn to: **Read**

100. The Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer was adopted and signed on: **22 March 1985**

1. Established in 1998, Pakistan National Accreditation Council is under the administrative control of the Ministry of _____.

- (a) Communications
(b) Defence Production
(c) **Science & Technology**
(d) Housing & Works

2. The newly commissioned Pakistan Navy Ship Hunain made its maiden voyage from _____ to Pakistan.

- (a) Belgium (b) China
(c) **Romania** (d) Turkiye

3. Kohat is a district of _____ province.

- (a) Sindh (b) **KP**
(c) Punjab (d) Balochistan

4. The headquarters of Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority is in _____.

- (a) **Karachi** (b) Islamabad
(c) Lahore (d) Gwadar

5. Pakistan's current National Aviation Policy was implemented in _____.

- (a) **2019** (b) 2020
(c) 2021 (d) 2023

6. On Aug. 17, Pakistan bestowed prestigious _____-i-Quaid-e-Azam upon Chinese scientist Liu Xinmin.

- (a) Hilal (b) **Tamgha**
(c) Nishan (d) Sitara

7. On Aug. 18, CM Punjab approved the summary for the establishment of _____ new tehsils in Lahore, taking the total to 10.

- (a) Four (b) **Five**
(c) Six (d) None of these

8. On Aug. 18, the Punjab government approved the policy giving the persons imprisoned in minor crimes to the disposal of the respective _____.

- (a) SSP (b) SDPO
(c) **DC** (d) Commissioner

9. On Aug. 20, Pakistan conducted successful training launch of surface-to-surface ballistic missile _____.

- (a) Ghauri-I (b) Shaheen-I
(c) **Shaheen-II** (d) None of these

10. On Aug. 21, Pakistan Army's Major Sania Safdar became the first peacekeeper of the United Nations Force in _____ to receive the 2023 "Certificate of Recognition" for advocating gender equality.

- (a) Mali (b) **Cyprus**
(c) Lebanon (d) None of these

11. The maximum number of the members (including the Chairman) of the Council of Islamic Ideology is _____.

- (a) **20** (b) 22
(c) 26 (d) 30

12. The Council of Islamic Ideology was established under Article _____ of the constitution of Pakistan, 1973.

- (a) **228** (b) 230
(c) 234 (d) 240

13. On Aug. 21, former foreign secretary _____ assumed office of the ECO secretary general.

- (a) **Asad Majeed** (b) Aizaz Ahmad
(c) Jalil A. Jilani (d) Tehmina Janjua

14. On _____, Pakistan's new ambassador to the United States, Rizwan Saeed, assumed responsibilities.

- (a) Aug. 20 (b) **Aug. 21**



- (c) Aug. 23 (d) Aug. 25

15. On _____, the Supreme Court approved the federal government's appeal to expunge controversial paras from the contentious Mubarak SanI case verdict.

- (a) Aug. 21 (b) **Aug. 22**
(c) Aug. 24 (d) Aug. 25

16. On Aug. 22, PM Shehbaz Sharif launched the Bura-Raast connectivity project which would link the payment mechanism with the _____ Monetary Fund.

- (a) International (b) Middle East
(c) **Arab** (d) None of these

17. On Aug. 22, at least 11 policemen were martyred in a severe attack by bandits in the Kacha area of _____.

- (a) Saidq Abad (b) **Rahim Yar Khan**
(c) Ghotki (d) Shikarpur

18. On Aug. 27, President Zardari

conferred _____-i-Imtiaz (Military) upon Commander of the Ground Forces of People's Liberation Army of China General Li Qiaoming.

- (a) Hilal (b) **Nishan**
(c) Tamgha (d) Sitara

19. On Aug. 28, the federal government appointed Moazzam Jah Ansari as the new IGP of _____.

- (a) KP (b) **Balochistan**
(c) Sindh (d) **None of these**

20. On Aug. 30, PM Shehbaz Sharif approved the transfer of Nespak from the Power Division to the _____ Division.

- (a) Interior (b) **Cabinet**
(c) Industries & Production
(d) Planning, Development & Reform

21. On Sept. 01, President Zardari approved the appointment of 12 scientists on the Board of Trustees of Pakistan Science Foundation for a period of _____ years.

- (a) **Three** (b) Four
(c) Five (d) None of these

22. On Sept. 01, US President Joseph R. Biden conferred lifetime achievement award on president Urdu center New York _____.

- (a) **Raies Warsi** (b) Naseer Turabi
(c) Iftikhar Arif (d) None of these

23. On Sept. 03, the federal government introduced and implemented the Contributory Pension Scheme with effect from _____.

- (a) **July 1, 2024** (b) Oct. 1, 2024
(c) Jan. 1, 2025 (d) July 1, 2025

24. On Sept. 03, the federal cabinet endorsed the signing of the Trade Framework Agreement between Pakistan and _____.

- (a) Zollverein (b) Steuerverein
(c) **Mercosur** (d) None of these

25. Mercosur is a South American trade bloc comprising Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and _____.

- (a) Bolivia (b) **Uruguay**
(c) Chile (d) Venezuela

26. On Sept. 04, the federal government appointed Lt. Gen. Akhtar Nawaz Satti as FPSC _____.

- (a) Member (b) **Chairman**
(c) Secretary (d) None of these

27. On Sept. 05, CM _____ inaugurated the country's first and largest primary school nutrition programme.

- (a) **Punjab** (b) KP

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(c) Sindh (d) Gilgit-Baltistan

28. On Sept. 05, the Oxford Union President Israr Khan Kakar was appointed as Pakistan's Ambassador-at-Large for _____.

- (a) Youth Empowerment
(b) Climate Change
(c) Water Resources
(d) None of these

29. On Sept. 06, the government banned _____ major expenditure items under its austerity drive.

- (a) Five (b) Six
(c) Eight (d) Ten

30. The National Accountability Ordinance was promulgated in _____.

- (a) 1999 (b) 2000
(c) 2001 (d) 2003

31. On Sept. 06, Tokyo Olympics gold medallist Haider Ali won a _____ medal in the Paris Paralympics discus throw.

- (a) Bronze (b) Silver
(c) Gold (d) None of these

32. On Sept. 10, the Federal Judicial Academy and _____ signed an MoU to collaborate on accelerating justice within the child rights agenda in Pakistan.

- (a) Unicef (b) Unesco
(c) OHCHR (d) None of these

33. The Federal Judicial Academy is located in _____.

- (a) Lahore (b) Karachi
(c) Islamabad (d) Hyderabad

34. On Sept. 10, President Zardari increased the number of judges of Peshawar High Court, from 20 to _____, including its chief justice.

- (a) 25 (b) 30
(c) 35 (d) None of these

35. On Sept. 11, National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq suspended dissent-at-arms _____.

- (a) Ishaq Satti (b) Munawar Khan
(c) Ishaq Ashraf (d) None of these

36. On Sept. 12, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation trade ministers met in _____.

- (a) Beijing (b) Islamabad
(c) Astana (d) New Delhi

37. On Sept. 13, the ADB approved a _____ million loan to support the rehabilitation and improve climate-resilience, safety of roads in _____.

- (a) Punjab (b) KP
(c) AJK (d) None of these

38. On Sept. 13, Pakistan secured 18th

position in the fifth World Nomad Games with three _____ medals.

- (a) Bronze (b) Silver
(c) Gold (d) None of these

39. On Sept. 13, Ambassador Asif Ali Durrani, Pakistan's Special Representative for _____, stepped down.

- (a) OIC (b) Afghanistan
(c) UNESCO (d) CPEC

40. On Sept. 13, the International Maritime Sustainability Exhibition and Conference 2024 started in _____.

- (a) Lahore (b) Gwadar
(c) Karachi (d) Islamabad

INTERNATIONAL

1. South Korea's capital is _____.

- (a) Seoul (b) Busan
(c) Suncheon (d) Seosan

2. On Aug. 16, Paetongtarn Shinawatra became the youngest prime minister of _____.

- (a) Thailand (b) Mongolia
(c) South Korea (d) None of these

3. On Aug. 19, the US and _____ militaries kicked off their major annual joint military drills - Ulchi Freedom Shield.

- (a) Japanese (b) Cambodian
(c) South Korean (d) Thai

4. On Aug. 21, the Bangladesh Cricket Board named ex-skipper _____ as its president.

- (a) Nafees Iqbal (b) Akram Khan
(c) Faruque Ahmed
(d) Shahriar Nafees

5. On Aug. 22, Afghanistan's Taliban-led foreign ministry appointed Mawlawi Badreddin Haqqani as its first accredited ambassador to the _____.

- (a) UN (b) Maldives
(c) UAE (d) IMF

6. The first country to accept a Taliban envoy was _____.

- (a) UAE (b) Tajikistan
(c) China (d) Pakistan

7. On Aug. 22, a massive 2,492-carat diamond, the second largest in the world, was discovered in _____.

- (a) Botswana (b) USA
(c) South Africa (d) Kenya

8. On Aug. 25, _____ President Kais Saied replaced various ministers, including from the foreign and defence portfolios.

- (a) Lebanese (b) Tunisian
(c) Jordanian (d) Libyan

9. On Aug. 25, Bangladesh claimed their first-ever win against Pakistan in their _____-year Test history.

- (a) 21 (b) 26
(c) 28 (d) 30

10. On Aug. 25, Telegram chief executive Pavel Durov was arrested in _____.

- (a) Germany (b) France
(c) USA (d) Russia

11. On Aug. 26, _____ unveiled a new "suicide drone".

- (a) Russia (b) China
(c) North Korea (d) South Korea

12. On Aug. 27, _____, a factory supervisor who was the first rioter to enter the US Capitol, was sentenced to 53 months in prison.

- (a) Paul Gosar (b) Ali Alexander
(c) Michael Sparks (d) Sidney Powell

13. The attack on US Congress by Donald Trump supporters was made on _____.

- (a) Jan. 6, 2021 (b) Jan. 8, 2021
(c) Jan. 10, 2021 (d) Jan. 16, 2021

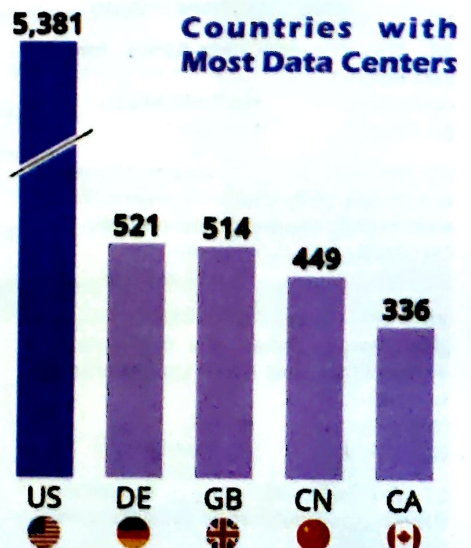
14. On Aug. 27, India's cricket chief _____ was elected unopposed as chairman of the ICC.

- (a) Roger Binny (b) Jay Shah
(c) Rajeev Shukla (d) None of these

15. On Aug. 28, the UNSC unanimously voted to extend a long-running peacekeeping mission in _____ for another year.

- (a) Mali (b) Lebanon
(c) Somalia (d) Cyprus

16. On Aug. 28, _____ Dawid Malan



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retired from international cricket.

- (a) England's (b) Australia's
(c) New Zealand's (d) South Africa's

17. On Aug. 30, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky dismissed the country's _____ chief, Mykola Oleshchuk.

- (a) Navy (b) Army
(c) Air Force (d) Intelligence

18. On Aug. 30, _____ supreme court ordered social media giant X to be taken down in the country.

- (a) Argentina's (b) Brazil's
(c) Vietnam's (d) France's

19. On Sept. 02, the United States seized Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's plane in the _____.

- (a) Mexico
(b) Dominican Republic
(c) Bolivia (d) Argentina

20. On Sept. 03, the Indian state of _____ passed a law that could lead to the execution of rapists.

- (a) Punjab (b) UP
(c) West Bengal (d) Maharashtra

21. On Sept. 03, _____ appointed Isabel Perello as the country's top judge, making her the first woman to run the Supreme Court.

- (a) Finland (b) Sweden
(c) Spain (d) Belgium

22. The first openly transgender athlete to compete in a Paralympics is _____ Valentina Petrillo.

- (a) Turkiye's (b) Italy's
(c) Norway's (d) Iceland's

23. On Sept. 05, the UAE announced the completion of the Arab world's first nuclear power plant – _____ Barakah Nuclear Energy Plant.

- (a) Dubai's (b) Sharjah's
(c) Abu Dhabi's (d) None of these

24. The recent China-Africa forum was held in _____.

- (a) Beijing (b) Addis Ababa
(c) Algiers (d) Cairo

25. On Sept. 06, _____ stopped foreign adoptions of its children, overturning a more than three-decade-old rule.

- (a) China (b) India
(c) Thailand (d) Afghanistan

26. On Sept. 08, the _____ government asked the Afghanistan embassy to shut down its diplomatic mission.

- (a) German (b) UK
(c) Australian (d) Austrian

27. On Sept. 08, _____ incumbent President Abdelmajjid Tebboune was re-elected.

- (a) Madagascar's (b) Algeria's
(c) Burkina Faso's (d) Kenya's

28. On Sept. 08, _____ and the US agreed on a phased pullout of the US-led anti-jihadist coalition.

- (a) Syria (b) Congo
(c) Iraq (d) Mali

29. On Sept. 09, Jannik Sinner became the first _____ man to win the US Open.

- (a) French (b) Greek
(c) Italian (d) None of these

30. On Sept. 09, India and _____ signed a nuclear cooperation agreement in New Delhi.

- (a) Singapore (b) Turkiye
(c) UAE (d) Japan

31. On Sept. 10, _____ launched its historic Polaris Dawn mission.

- (a) SpaceX (b) Blue Horizon
(c) Blue Origin (d) Virgin Galactic

32. On Sept. 10, Western powers announced fresh sanctions on _____ for supplying Russia with short-range missiles.

- (a) North Korea (b) Iran
(c) China (d) None of these

33. On Sept. 11, _____ became the world's first country to allow voters to elect judges at all levels.

- (a) Mexico (b) Brazil
(c) Austria (d) Latvia

34. On _____, former Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori died at 86.

- (a) Sept. 11 (b) Sept. 12
(c) Sept. 14 (d) Sept. 15

35. On Sept. 13, the Dutch city of _____ became the first in the world to pass local laws banning advertisements for fossil fuels, petrol cars and long-distance air travel.

- (a) Amsterdam (b) Utrecht
(c) The Hague (d) Maastricht

36. On Sept. 13, the fifth World Nomad Games ended in _____, Kazakhstan.

- (a) Almaty (b) Baikonur
(c) Astana (d) Turkistan

37. On Sept. 13, China's top legislative body approved a proposal to raise the country's retirement age for men to _____ years from 60.

- (a) 62 (b) 63
(c) 65 (d) 70

38. On Sept. 14, _____ blasted its new Chamran-1 research satellite into orbit.

- (a) Russia (b) Turkiye
(c) Iran (d) None of these

39. On Sept. 15, novelist Elias Khoury, one of _____ most renowned writers, died at 76.

- (a) Syria's (b) Lebanon's
(c) Turkiye's (d) Libya's

40. On Sept. 15, _____ announced to deport two million Afghan migrants in six months.

- (a) Pakistan (b) Saudi Arabia
(c) Iran (d) Russia

Which Countries Are Meeting Their Paris Agreement Goals?

| | Target | Projected achievement |
|----------------------|--------|-----------------------|
| Saudi Arabia | + >4°C | + >4°C |
| Indonesia | + >4°C | + >4°C |
| United Arab Emirates | +2°C | + >4°C |
| Russia | +4°C | +4°C |
| Mexico | +4°C | +4°C |
| South Korea | +3°C | +4°C |
| Egypt | + >4°C | +3°C |
| China | +3°C | +3°C |
| India | +3°C | +3°C |
| European Union | +3°C | +3°C |